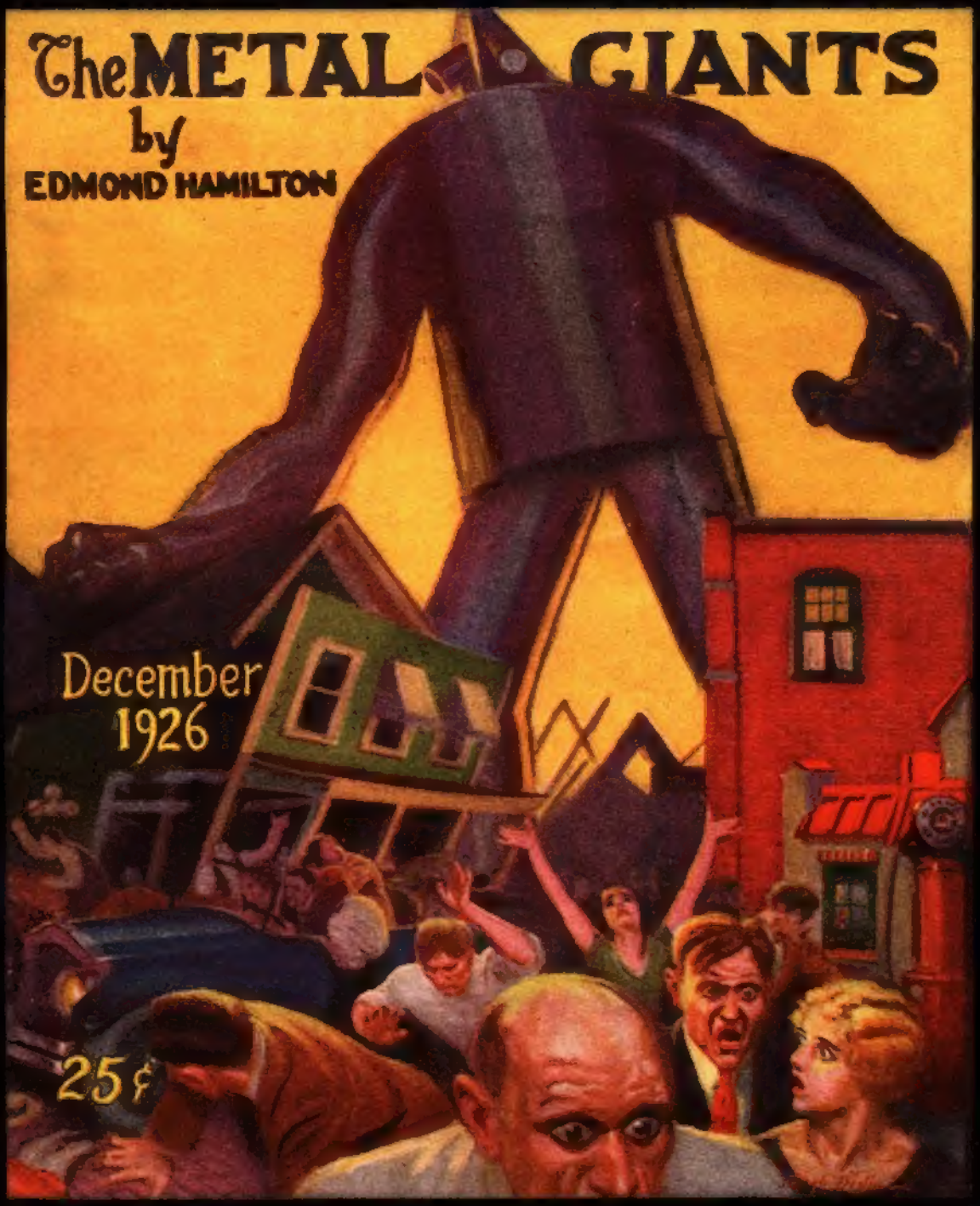
Weird Tales

The Unique Magazine



Don't Take the Chance

While every live newsdealer in America will have a supply each month, you may find when you call for your copy of the current issue that WEIRD TALES is sold out. And you may have to call at several stands before you find a copy.

INSURE YOURSELF

against any such calamity by seeing that your name is on our subscription list, and WEIRD TALES will come to you each month without the bother of searching the newsstands for it.

Just fill out the coupon below and send it in. That's the safest way.

WEIRD TALES
408 Holliday Bldg.,
Indianapolis, Ind.

I enclose $———. Please send me WEIRD TALES for one year.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

WEIRD TALES

A Magazine of the Bizarre and Unusual

$2.50 Per Year in U. S.
($3.00 in Canada)

Treasure Trove

WEIRD TALES is a treasure chest of unusual stories, of tales that are different; fascinating weird-scientific stories that plumb the future with prophetic eye; imaginative tales that take one away from the humdrum environment of everyday life; tales that thrill and amaze; and uncanny stories that send cold shivers up the spines of the readers; stories such as can be found in no other magazine. Among the many noteworthy stories in the next few issues will be:

THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SKULLS, *by A. L. Smith*
A thrilling weird tale of the Hartz Mountains—a tale of the present day, with a breath of horror out of the past that sweeps through it like a chill wind from the tomb.

THE CITY OF GLASS, *by Joel Martin Nichols, Jr.*
Those who recall "The Lure of Atlantis" will welcome this fascinating new Atlantean story by the same author—an eery tale of the African desert, utterly strange and gripping.

THE HORROR AT RED HOOK, *by H. P. Lovecraft*
Age-old horror is a hydra with a thousand heads, and the cults of darkness are rooted in blasphemies deeper than the well of Democritus.

THE ATOMIC CONQUERORS, *by Edmond Hamilton*
Up from an infra-universe concealed in a grain of sand came these terrible beings, pouring out to conquer our own world, in which their tiny universe was but an atom—a thrilling story by the author of "Across Space."

THE LOST RACE, *by Robert E. Howard*
The author of "Wolfshead" weaves a bizarre romance of the cave-dwelling Picts—that uncanny, half-mythical people that inhabited the British Isles before the coming of the Britons.

THE HEAD, *by Bassett Morgan*
A weird and terrible tale of surgery and horror in the jungle wilderness, written by the author of "Laocoon."

THE LAST HORROR, *by Eli Colter*
A tale of weird surgery—one of the most dramatic and gripping stories ever offered by any magazine—a breath-taking, thought-stimulating narrative by the author of "On the Dead Man's Chest."

THESE are but a few of the many super-excellent stories in store for the readers of WEIRD TALES. To make sure of getting your copy each month, and thus avoid the embarrassment of finding your favorite news stand sold out, just fill out the coupon below and let us send it right to your home. That's the safest way.

WEIRD TALES,
450 E. Ohio St.,
Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed find $2.50 for 1 year's subscription to "Weird Tales," to begin with the January issue. ($3.00 in Canada.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME VIII NUMBER 6

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the postoffice at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 35 cents. Subscription, $2.50 a year in the United States; $3.00 a year in Canada. English office: G. M. Jeffries Agency, Hopefield House, Hanwell, London, W. 7. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' main office at 450 East Ohio Street, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1926, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for December, 1926

Cover Design ..... **Joseph Doolin**
Illustrating a scene in "The Metal Giants"

The Metal Giants ..... **Edmond Hamilton** **724**
Huge metal monsters spread terror through the land—the tale of a Frankenstein that turned on its creator

The Grinning Mummy ..... **Seabury Quinn** **739**
Jules de Grandin's keen brain finds the solution of the weird death that struck down Professor Butterbaugh

Orbit of Souls ..... **Arthur J. Burks** **755**
The tale of a businessman with heart of stone, and the eery horror that befell him

The Malignant Pearl ..... **Thomas H. Griffiths** **769**
A tale of West Indian voodoo, and the curse that caused the black pearl to burn on the breast of the Countess of Clamnel

(Continued on Next Page)

COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

(Continued from Preceding Page)

Apricots From Ispahan ..... **E. Hoffmann Price** **779**
An orientale about Absal the scribe, Musa the gardener, Zaid the astrologer, a Kashmiri girl and the Sultan of Djalan-batu

The Mystic Bowl ..... **Eugene Clement d'Art** **788**
The cobra struck silently, in the darkness of the room—and Roy McFarland looked into the mystic bowl

Song of the Brothers of Mercy ..... **Friedrich von Schiller** **790**
Verse, translated for Weird Tales by Francis Hard

The Foe From Beyond ..... **F. Williams Sarles** **791**
Tasmari, Queen of the Vortex, comes back from the Second Cycle to rob Paul Duval of the soul of Marguerite

The Beast ..... **Paul Benton** **803**
Throughout the world he hunted Walter Strong, till the Beast turned on his pursuer—a strange tale of animalism

The Suicide ..... **Malcolm Ford Henry** **815**
A gray story of the horror of death—the vain regrets of a man who was already dead

The Legacy of Hate ..... **Victor Rousseau** **819**
The fourth in a series of stories, each complete in itself, dealing with Dr. Ivan Brodsky, "The Surgeon of Souls"

Danse Macabre ..... **Jean Lahors** **826**
Another version of the French poem that inspired Saint-Saens to compose his tone-poem, "Danse Macabre"

The Star Shell (Part 2) ..... **George C. Wallis & B. Wallis** **827**
A four-part weird-scientific serial about a thrilling voyage to the planet Jupiter

Yule-Horror ..... **H. P. Lovecraft** **846**
Verse

The Guard's Error ..... **W. Benson Dooling** **847**
All day he stood guard, a huge black, clad in a loin-cloth and armed with a huge simitar to protect his master

Weird Story Reprint
No. 18. The Apparition of Mrs. Veal ..... **Daniel Defoe** **851**
The author of Robinson Crusoe relates how a woman talked with her friend at Canterbury the day after her death

The Eyrie **857**
A chat with the readers

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

WEIRD TALES

Western Advertising Office:
WEIRD TALES
450 E. Ohio Street
Chicago, Ill.
Phone, Superior 5556

Eastern Advertising Office:
GEORGE W. STEARNS, Mgr.
Flatiron Building
New York, N. Y.
Phone, Ashland 7329

The METAL GIANTS

BY

Edmond Hamilton

"Pivoting instantly, the huge wheel rolled with terrific speed and power toward the giant that waited to grapple with it."

AS TO the beginning of the matter, there is information in plenty. Dusty files of yellowing newspapers yield columns about it, for it was a mild sensation at the time. And concerning the appalling climax of the business, when the machine-monsters burst upon an incredulous world, there are but few who need to be informed. But what of the four years between, when that monstrous menace to humanity lay hidden in the West Virginia hills, germinating, growing, reaching? Will anything more of that time ever be known than a few scrawled pages in a little diary? Shall we ever comprehend much of the story but the petty furor of its beginning and its flaming, tragic end? Well, to that beginning.

One starts with Detmold. A professor of electro-chemistry, a rather unusual professor, who was constantly advancing radical, astounding theories in almost every branch of science. A few of his theories he proved, but most of them were unprovable, wild, untrammeled speculations. Today his suggestions are genuinely interesting and stimulating, but at the time it seemed that his experiments, his statements, were becoming more and more fantastic, calling forth an ever-increasing flood of shocked protests from outraged scientists. And this was not at all to the liking of Juston University, where he taught. Juston is the third oldest college in the country, and has an ancient, scholarly tradition that it takes very seriously.

So when complaints began to come in from some of the more prosperous alumni, possible donors of buildings and the like, the middle-aged gentlemen who directed the university's

policy met around a mahogany table and decided that Detmold must be removed from the institution at the first opportunity, as quietly as possible. And the next morning, as if to confirm the wisdom of their decision, Detmold announced the partial success of his latest experiment, which was the making of an artificial brain.

It was a supreme chance for the sensation-mongering Sunday supplements, for the gibing columnists, and they seized it at once. Detmold's brain, as it was called, was derided in the theaters, cartooned in the newspapers, and jeered at by his fellow-scientists. And yet, reading over the man's ideas now, it is hard for us to detect any flagrant absurdity.

No doubt it was a startling proposition, to construct an artificial brain that would possess consciousness, memory, reasoning power. That mass of fiber inside our skulls by virtue of which we comprehend the world about us is a seemingly unsolvable mystery. Yet even such an idea as Detmold's, advanced by a man of his admitted intellect and achievements, should have been given a fair hearing, at least.

In fact, experimenters had already tried to reproduce the make-up of the brain. Several scientists, following up the work of Loeb and Kendler in their efforts to manufacture living protoplasm from chemicals, had tried to produce a mass of living cells, with which to form a living organ, a heart or a brain. All such efforts had been failures, and it was admitted that success seemed impossible.

But Detmold had attacked the problem from an entirely different standpoint. It was his theory that the sensations of the nervous system are flashed to the brain as electric currents, or vibrations, and that it was the action of these vibratory currents on the brain-stuff that caused consciousness and thought. Thus, instead of trying to make simple, living cells and from them work up the complicated structure of the brain, he had constructed an organ, a brain, of metal, entirely inorganic and lifeless, yet whose atomic structure he claimed was analogous to the the atomic structure of a living brain. He had then applied countless different electrical vibrations to this metallic brain-stuff, and finally announced that under vibrations of certain frequency the organ had shown faint signs of consciousness.

To the public of that time, such an assertion must have seemed quite insane. The usual comment on the subject was that if this were a sample of Detmold's ideas, he had best keep the first brain he manufactured for his own use. And Detmold's own attitude did not help his case, for he was an impatient, high-tempered type, prone to regard as fools and asses all those people who expressed any doubt concerning his work.

Three eminent scientists accepted his invitation to witness a demonstration of his experiment, and their comments later were caustic. It would seem that when the three illustrious gentlemen called at his laboratory at the appointed hour, Detmold had bruskly informed them that he was working out a sudden new idea concerning the experiment, and that they would have to call a few days later, by which time he hoped to have achieved complete success.

Naturally, that was the end of him at the university. It was plain to everyone that the man was a cheap faker who had warded off investigation and exposure at the last moment, and a cry went up that he should be removed from the institution he was disgracing. At the year's biggest football game the next afternoon, when Juston played Bannister College, ten enterprizing students rushed onto the field between halves and unrolled a large cloth banner, with the painted words, "Fire Detmold!" A

wave of applause and laughter rippled across the stadium at sight of it.

And after the game, the football team, become heroes of the hour by their victory over Bannister, marched together to the home of the university's president and presented him with a petition demanding the summary dismissal of the professor whose charlatanry was smirching the name of Juston. The president smilingly accepted the document.

So the next morning, after an hour of nervous fidgeting and snapping of fingers, the president summoned Detmold and smoothly informed him that his resignation would be accepted.

THERE was a stormy scene in that office when Detmold learned that he was to be shunted out of the university. He was a tall, powerful man with a keen, relentless face, and in his rage he came near to laying violent hands on the president, and said a number of scathing things regarding that individual's stupidity and cowardice, winding up with a red-hot denunciation of the world at large. When he burst out of the office, he thrust rudely through the little knot of curious listeners at the door, and hurried over to his laboratory, to begin packing the experiment that had caused his dismissal.

It was there that he was found an hour later by Gilbert Lanier, the one instructor at Juston who understood and sympathized with the man. Also Lanier, a diffident young English teacher, was probably Detmold's only friend, for Detmold seemed to have no close relatives at all, and his testy, high-strung nature repelled most people. Sitting on a desk, moodily contemplating the little room that had been his private laboratory for years, he told Lanier of his dismissal, raging the while at the president and his disapproval of "impossible theories".

"Impossible theories!" he mocked. "My God, and I used to think that a great scientific discovery was welcomed with open arms! And these fools think I am crazy, to work on such a thing at all! Look at this, Lanier,—you haven't seen it since I made the improvements," and he turned to a table on which rested the artificial brain.

It was very simple in appearance, resembling an egg of black metal, some ten inches in length. Inset in its upper surface was a small lens of glass, and leading into each end of the thing were three wires, which were connected to a complicated tangle of electrical apparatus on the other side of the room.

As Lanier watched, Detmold made swift adjustments and snapped on several switches, and the low humming of a motor-generator filled the room. Turning eagerly, his smoldering resentment forgotten for the moment, he said, "The same basic principle. The T-wave, the vibratory current, is produced over there and led into the brain-case to act on the atomic organism inside. Right now that thing is conscious," and he gazed at it with mingled fondness and pride.

Lanier could not restrain an increduluous shrug of his shoulders, and Detmold took it up at once. "I repeat, conscious," he asserted. "It is consciousness of a crude, dim sort, but still consciousness, awareness, knowledge. And I can prove it now. Since you last saw it I've provided it with the sense of sight. See that inset lens? Well, it's like no lens you ever saw, for it's really an artificial eye, that I made myself. There is an artificial retina beneath and it is connected direct to the brain-stuff, and carries its sensations to it, as electric currents."

"An artificial retina?" asked Lanier. "Isn't that going a bit too far? An inorganic material sensitive to light?"

"Did you never hear of a substance called selenium?" asked Detmold with fine sarcasm, and as Lanier started, he added, "Ah, you begin to see! You remember that the electrical resistance of selenium varies enormously in light and in darkness, and you begin to perceive how the light striking that artificial retina could be translated into electricity and flashed to the brain. It is all so clear—now. But I was telling you about the eye. There's a shutter that closes across that lens, much like a high-speed camera shutter, but capable of being opened or closed by an inconceivably delicate force. I'm not going to tell you all about it, you or anyone, but watch it now," and taking a small flashlight from his pocket, he flashed its brilliant little beam directly on the inset lens.

Lanier watched intently. There was no change for a space of seconds, then, with a tiny click, the shutter closed across the lens. He drew a long breath as he straightened up.

"You saw?" asked Detmold, snapping off the switches. "The thing can see with that eye, just enough to differentiate between light and dark, and it hates bright light, so what? It closes the shutter, cutting off the light. Isn't that intelligence, mind, reason? Crude and feeble now, I grant you, but it will grow. I will develop it. I'll go farther yet." His voice dropped, and the brooding, sullen expression crept back over his face. "And yet those fools say, 'Impossible, impossible!' Damn them, this metal brain has more intelligence than they. Or it will have. It *will* have." As his friend remained silent he asked, "Do you think I am faking it, Lanier?"

"No," was the slow answer, "but I do think you're treading very near forbidden ground. That movement—that intelligence—have you considered, Detmold, what an intelligence might be like, that had no controlling, directing power, a brain without a soul?"

"Theology, mysticism!" cried the other. "No, Lanier, I am going on with this, if only to show these fools the depth of their folly. I have a place where I can work in peace, thank God, and where the confounded newspapers won't pester me, for I'll tell no one where I'm going. No, not even you," he added, clapping his friend on the back affectionately, "for you might talk in your sleep. But when I finish it, you'll hear from me. And so will the world."

Lanier did not reply, and in silence they began the work of packing. And the next day, when they stood on the station platform in the last few minutes before the train's departure, there seemed little to say. The whistle of the locomotive, a last clasp of Detmold's hand and a muttered "Good-bye," and the train was receding swiftly down the track, and he was gone.

More than one person wondered where Detmold had gone. His name was prominent in the newspapers that night, was mentioned often in homes and clubs and restaurants, with a chuckle or a sneer. It was not mentioned so much the next night; a month afterward it was seldom heard; and in a year not one person in ten thousand remembered the man. None knew where he had gone, his name and personality and strange ideas had sunk into silence and forgetfulness; and laughing, toiling, hurrying, the world sped on.

2

It was fully four years after Detmold's disappearance that the strange phenomena at Stockton began to attract attention. Stockton was a small steel town in northern West Virginia, set in a long valley between dark, thickly wooded hills, and from those hills came news of mysterious occurrences.

The first thing to reach the newspapers was a small article printed early in July, telling of some very curious ground-markings that had been discovered several miles west of Stockton. These marks were circles some ten feet across in which trees, bushes and ground had evidently been stamped down by some tremendous force, forming circular pits in the ground some three feet in depth. A number of these strange pits had been found by farmers, and no one seemed able to advance a plausible suggestion as to their cause.

The article was published throughout the country, but as no further news on the matter was immediately forthcoming, it was forgotten in a week, as stranger incidents have been forgotten.

Ten days passed before the second Stockton dispatch was printed, an article that caused a good many smiles. This dispatch told of a farmer named Morgan who lived in the hills north of the city, a wild, lonely district, and who had suddenly appeared in Stockton with his family and few possessions packed into a ramshackle Ford, intent on departing from the vicinity as soon as possible. When questioned as to the cause of his sudden migration, he told a very strange story.

Two nights before, he said, he had been awakened shortly after midnight by a crashing, snapping sound outside. His small house was set on the steep side of a narrow, winding valley, and the noise seemed to come from the forests at its foot. His curiosity aroused, he had stepped out on his little porch and had dimly seen, in the moonlight, a gigantic shape that was moving along the valley.

He described it, very vaguely, as being a monstrous parody of a human figure, with two huge legs or supports, all of three hundred feet in height, and for body, a large, cylindrical mass. It gleamed in the moonlight, he said, as if it were made of *metal.* It was striding down the valley in a stiff, immense imitation of the human step, and he could see that its towering limbs or supports, which buckled and straightened midway, like a human knee, were crushing the forest beneath them like a forest of twigs. Only one hurried, misty glimpse of the thing he got, and it disappeared around a turn in the valley, but when he explored the next morning he found its tracks, shallow, circular pits, identical in appearance with the strange markings that had already been found.

There was a good deal of amusement in Stockton over this tale, though Morgan sullenly asserted its truth. When it was reprinted throughout the country, the story was generally accompanied by some humorous comment regarding the powers of West Virginia moonshine, and the progressiveness of the day, when tipplers now saw weird machines instead of the traditional serpents.

But the next day, after Morgan and his family had clattered out of Stockton in the rickety little car, it occurred to an inquisitive newspaper reporter to drive out to the valley and gather some information—not that he put any faith in Morgan's story, but in order to get the views of the man's former neighbors, the farmers of that section.

Early that evening the reporter returned, and the news he brought set Stockton buzzing with conjecture and argument. For he had not only found the markings Morgan had described, he had definitely ascertained that before the night in question no such marks had been seen in the little valley. And the few families who made their homes in that district were not laughing over the matter, but seemed considerably perturbed. All of them testified as to Morgan's

sobriety and truthfulness, and one household added a corroborating occurrence of a few days before, when an eight-year old son had returned from a ramble in the hills with a twisted, childish story of having seen "a big tin man" a long way off.

Such was the information the reporter brought back, and it caused excited discussion through all the town. Was such a thing possible? Could Morgan's story have been true? But if so, if such a thing had actually been seen, what was it? Machine, vehicle, what? No, it could not be true, there must be some mistake, some exaggeration. And yet——

The wires out of Stockton were humming that night, and in Boston and Duluth and Fort Worth, the next morning, people were to read and wonder. It was a new sensation, and they waited with interest for further news. Whatever happened, the reporters would get it and serve it up in their daily paper, with photographs made on the spot and a diagram to make it all clear.

Until late that night the city's principal streets were quite crowded, and there was constant discussion and speculation. For the first time, Stockton was finding itself a center of national interest, and it was very proud of its sudden fame.

Once, an hour before midnight, a great light was seen above the northern hills, a brilliant shaft of purple light that swept across the sky like a gigantic, flaming finger, then faded into the darkness. The crowds in the streets saw and marveled. For some time they watched, but it was not seen again, and the blackness of the night seemed to close around the city like a giant hand.

From the steel mills, great tongues of red flame shot up, soaring, beautiful, conveying a warm quality of reassurance against the vast, brooding darkness. The mighty furnaces and towers, standing out black and austere against the glare of molten steel, held within them a calm, silent encouragement, as if proclaiming the greatness and power of their builder, man. But the flame-shot sky behind them, like blood. . . .

3

LANIER arrived in Stockton early the next morning. His face was drawn and haggard, as it had been since he first read a certain humorous newspaper dispatch, and in his mind was an immense perplexity, a vague, chilling fear.

Until late in the afternoon he tramped wearily through the town, asking in all quarters the same question: "Do you know of anyone named Detmold who lives in or around Stockton? A tall, strong man——" And from all he questioned he got no trace, until he happened into the office of a small trucking and hauling company.

None there knew anything of Detmold, but they had done some work for a certain Foster, who corresponded exactly to Lanier's description. This man lived several miles from the city, in a northeastern direction, and had hired them to haul some boxes from the railroad to his home, an old farmhouse. A mighty bad road it was, too, and this Foster had been very particular about the moving of his stuff. Yes, they could direct him to the place. You went out such and such a concrete road, and turned up a rutty lane, very steep. . . .

By the time the sun hung poised above the western horizon, Lanier was already ascending that steep, twisted road. More than once he glanced back at the city below, a city bathed in the golden afternoon sunlight. Its streets were filled now with workers returning home from the mills, tired and blackened, calling out to the friends they met for the latest news

on "that Morgan critter," as they termed it.

A quiet serenity, a dreamy, contented peace pervaded Stockton, contrasting with the tense excitement of the preceding night. In a thousand homes, the evening meal was being prepared and the day's gossip related, in the west the sun sank lower and lower, and all around, beyond the encircling hills, death marched toward the city with crashing, giant strides.

4

The sun had slipped down very near the horizon when a sudden jangling of bells ran through Stockton, hurried, confused. The factory whistles blew frantically for a few minutes, then suddenly, unaccountably stopped. A cry, a shout was running over the city, swift as spreading flame, and everywhere houses belched forth their inmates and people looked anxiously about for the cause of disturbance. And then they looked up to the hills and saw their doom.

For on the heights around Stockton, in a great circle, stood a score or more of gigantic shapes, silent, motionless. They seemed quite identical in appearance, towering metal giants cast in a roughly human form, each with two immense limbs, smooth columns of metal ten feet across, looming up all of a hundred yards in height. And set on those two huge supports, the *body,* an upright cylinder of the same gleaming metal, fifty feet in diameter, quite smooth and unbroken of surface, and bearing on its smooth top something that flashed brilliantly in the sunlight, a small, triangular case in each side of which glittered a lens of glass. And from each cylinder projected two additional limbs, arms, shining and flexible, hanging almost to the ground, tapering, twisting.

The bells had stopped ringing, and in thick, stupefied silence the people in the streets gazed up at the metal giants, who surveyed them in equal immobility and silence. Then from one of their number sounded a weird call, a harsh, wailing sound that rose to a high-pitched scream. And at that signal all of the things began to stride swiftly down to the city, the mighty limbs whirling out and crashing down in steps of unbelievable length, buckling and straightening and whirling out in another step. Rapidly, inexorably, they closed in on Stockton, a diminishing, tightening circle.

That stunned moment of sheer astonishment fled, and a vast, hoarse bellow sounded, the mad shout of thousands of panic-stricken people. Down the streets raced careering autos, ripping through crowds of hapless pedestrians, driving into the mass of tangled wrecks that blocked every corner in a few minutes. Screaming, pushing, striking, the mobs flowed along the streets, striving always to win away from the city's central section and escape into the surrounding country. And all the while, with thundering, earth-shaking strides, the metal shapes marched on toward the city.

On and on they came, until they had reached the outer suburbs, looming up above the buildings like giants in a toy village. The long, flexible arms were whipping out now, with tremendous power. Smash!—and a small brick building toppled. Smash!—a giant limb crashed down through a bungalow. Smash! smash! smash!—on and on, slowly, deliberately, reducing the city to ruins.

They made but small effort to kill the screaming little figures that ran about beneath them, but they let few of these escape outside their circle, herding them always toward the center of the city, as they closed in on it.

Nearly an hour had passed before that ring of giants had contracted to a mile diameter. Inside of it the

streets were solidly packed with people, and the buildings were full to bursting, the supposedly safer cellars being pools of suffocating, trampling humanity.

Around was ranged the circle of the metal shapes, and for a moment they seemed to be contemplating the tiny, frenzied throngs beneath them. Again sounded the wailing signal, and each of the things seemed to be fumbling behind itself with a flexible arm, an arm that reappeared grasping a small, black sphere. In unison, they thrust forward these globes, from each of which a cloud of yellow gas instantly spurted, falling on the crowds beneath, flowing over and through them, a saffron flood that rolled on through the buildings and down into the packed cellars.

Wherever it touched, the people sank into death, slumping down like bags of sawdust, suddenly limp and inert. And the faces of the dead were dreadful to see, shrunken, collapsed, like shriveled masks of skin.

Swiftly the gas flowed away and sank into the ground, and the heaps of bodies were revealed, silent and unmoving, a strange contrast to the shouting and running of the moment before. Then smash! smash!—and the huge limbs were jerking out and crashing buildings down, kicking them over, pushing them aside, covering the mounds of dead with a tangled mass of broken bricks and twisted steel.

The metal giants strode away, here and there crushing a building, uprooting a track, moving toward the eastern end of the valley, whose inhabitants had seen and were fleeing in terror. And one man had seen who did not flee, a man whose face was stamped with horror. It was Lanier, and from his distant hill-top he looked down on a mass of broken ruins where on hour before had been a bustling city.

As he watched, darkness flowed down on the city, veiling its shattered remnants. He heard distant shouts snapping out, up the valley, where the metal shapes had gone. He could hear, too, a humming drone, as an airplane came and went and circled over the broken city, hovering for a time, then winging away toward the north. For some minutes he continued to peer into the deepening darkness, then rose stiffly from his crouched position and stumbled back into the forest, moving as a man in a daze. His brain held but one thought, his lips uttered but one word: "Detmold!"

5

And fear swept through the land. In New York the first fragmentary reports of the annihilation of Stockton had been greeted with a good-natured laugh, but as more and more details came in, extras began to pour into the streets, and crowds gathered around the clamorous bulletins. In troubled silence they read the account of the few survivors, the story of that red hour of Stockton's death. There came, too, later, short dispatches relating the further advance of the metal giants, who were evidently proceeding leisurely northward, killing, destroying, uprooting all in their path.

Clicking out over the network of wires, flashing across the night in radio waves went the short, ominous sentences, sentences in which an epoch of comparative safety and peace was dissolving, crumbling, falling. There were reports of action at Washington, of hurried meetings and swift discussions, and finally, late in the morning, a proclamation of the federal government was flashed to every section of the country.

It was evident, declared this statement, that the country was being attacked from within by men possessing new types of fighting machines,

with vast and unknown powers. These men, who were probably either anarchists or agents of some foreign power, were using as a weapon a new and very deadly poison gas, a gas that sank harmlessly through skin and flesh but which dissolved all kinds of bone like sugar in water, causing instant dissolution of the skeleton and skull of every human body it touched, resulting in instant collapse and death. Therefore, it was advisable for everyone living within a three hundred mile radius of Stockton to take refuge in flight. Troops and artillery were already on the way to meet and battle the new foe, and scientists were being consulted as to the best method of combating it. It was hoped that the people would give full co-operation to the government by following its orders carefully, refraining from spreading alarmist rumors, and trying to carry on all essential business as usual.

Thus the proclamation, and its businesslike sound caused people to breathe easier for a time. There had been so many emergencies before that had been met and conquered. War and riot, flood and fire. And after all, these new war-machines could not be so very formidable, even though they had devastated a city. That story of their size, hundreds of feet and such, must be exaggerated. As for the deadly gas, well, there had been deadly gases before. Anarchists, foreign invaders, whoever they were, the soldiers would stop them. A few high-explosive shells would fix them.

Thus did the average citizen reassure his household when anyone in it expressed anxiety or fear. After that first panicky moment, the usual serenity of the country was again ascendant, and there was but little open worry concerning the enemy. An ignorant observer would scarcely have suspected the existence of the things, except for the newspapers.

It was definitely known that the metal giants, leaving four of their number at Stockton, were now advancing north toward Wheeling and Pittsburgh, eighteen in number. Airplanes and scouts reported their destruction of all towns and villages in their path, whose inhabitants had fled at the first alarm. The War Department had decided to concentrate its force a few miles south of Wheeling, and ten thousand soldiers, part of them hastily assembled militia, had been flung across the enemy's path at that spot, backed by a heavy force of artillery. There were vague rumors of ambushes prepared for the foe, pits and high-explosive mines and the like.

On the evening of the third day after Stockton's destruction, the fighting-machines were reported to be less than twenty miles south of the troops, and were already being shelled by a few heavy guns that were mounted on railway platforms. In every city, all waited tensely for news of the first clash. The hours dragged past, the crowds moved restlessly about, and still came no news.

It was well after 2 o'clock in the morning that word finally came, that short, fateful dispatch that loosed terror on the world. It emanated from the fast-crumbling federal government, which had been transferred from Washington to Philadelphia:

PHILADELPHIA, July 24.—Word has been received by the War Department here that the troops defending Wheeling have been severely defeated by the enemy's fighting-machines, which, using some unknown device, projected a blanket of their deadly gas over the country for several miles ahead of them, nine-tenths of the troops having been killed without seeing the enemy. The remnant of the force has retreated toward Pittsburgh, and it is thought that the fighting-machines have already entered Wheeling. One is believed to have been destroyed by shell-fire early in the engagement, but aside from this they have proved to be quite invulnerable. No word has yet been received concerning the smaller force of troops detailed to attack the four machines at Stockton, but it is

doubtful, if such an attack has already been made, whether it was successful. No one has yet seen the men controlling and operating the fighting-machines, as they seem to stay closely hidden within the latter, but they have shown by their actions that they are quite merciless, so warning is conveyed to the people of the country that when any section of the country is invaded by the enemy in these machines, the only safety at present lies in flight. Offers of military aid have been tendered this government by several European powers, but until some new and effective weapon can be devised, it will be impossible to meet this unknown foe in battle with any chances of success.

6

When Lanier stumbled into Detmold's farmhouse, early in the second day after the massacre of Stockton, he could only half understand that he had finally found the object of his hours of searching. After that seeming eternity of wandering wildly through the forest, he was very near collapse. Even after his brain had cleared enough to recognize that this was the place that had been described to him, he took but little interest. In the kitchen of the house he found canned food, and after wolfing some of this he flung himself on a couch and slept heavily for all of that day and night, not waking until near noon of the third day.

But he woke with mind clear and alert, and feeling immensely hungry. After another sketchy meal from tins, he began to prowl about the house. And to his dismay, he found that there was no sign of Detmold's having occupied the place, for weeks at least.

The furniture of the house was very simple, and it was in the condition to be expected when kept by a careless bachelor. A single large room had been converted into a laboratory, but even this was in great disorder and had evidently been stripped of most of its apparatus. There were many unmistakable signs of Detmold's residence in the place, but none that would indicate how long before he had deserted it.

But in the laboratory, by chance, he found Detmold's diary, a thick, canvas-covered book tossed to one side of a table. Lanier glanced into it idly, then with startled interest, and an hour later was still reading intently.

For in it he found explanation, and found, too, greater fear. Now, for the first time, he saw clearly the monstrous horror that had been loosed on the world, saw it in its most terrible aspect.

The diary began with the events immediately previous to Detmold's departure from Juston, and seemed to be kept as a record of his various experiments, references to many of which Lanier could not understand. On the day of his ousting from the university, he had made some very vitriolic comments in the little book concerning the officials of Juston, and their general asininity. He also spoke of the place where he intended to carry on his experiments, an old farmhouse outside of Stockton, a half-forgotten inheritance. And when he had gone there, fitting the place up as a laboratory, he had done so under the name of Foster, in order to escape the unwelcome attention of prying reporters.

There were a number of gaps in the diary's entries, but on the whole, the story it told was quite continuous. He had found a place where he could work in peace, and had centered his time and effort on the metal brain, constantly striving to improve it. And as the months passed, he had made vast progress with the thing. Though the basic principle of it was the same, he had made it much larger, had made the ramifications of its atomic organism far more complex, with a corresponding increase in the thing's mental power. Instead of a crude, single lens, he had furnished it with two large, all-seeing eyes, one on each side of its oval case. He had

added an ear for the perception of sound, a super-microphone that caught the smallest sounds and, translating them into electrical impulses, flashed them to the central, conscious brain. And after months of weary trials, he had been able to furnish the brain with arms or members, two small, hollow limbs of flexible metal that projected from each end of the brain-case, being actuated by a chain of electro-magnets inside, so that the brain, by sending the correct electrical current through these magnets, could twist the arms about at its pleasure.

There came a page where the diary was spotted and hard to understand, where Detmold's mind had outleaped his pen in his exultation. Gradually Lanier made out that he had perfected a method which made it unnecessary to produce the actuating electric-vibrations outside the brain. Instead, he had found a way to produce these vibrations inside of the very brain-stuff itself, inside of its atomic structure, constantly and automatically. He had achieved this by a manipulation of electrons, a tampering with the innermost secrets of matter. How he had accomplished this stupendous feat was not explained, for he had confided but few technical secrets to the diary. But by virtue of this discovery, the metal brain became, for the first time, wholly independent of anything outside itself, quite self-sufficient and almost, one could say, living.

And from that point forward, the pages of the little book were records of wonder. Detmold wrote always of the brain's leaping intelligence, its growing power to differentiate between the sensations it received, its deft handling of objects and instruments. And later, of teaching it to read, of starting with children's picture-books and working on with models and printed words, until finally it could read books, and evidently understand them, at least partly. It was significant, he noted, that while it would read, with unvarying attention, any scientific work, it rejected completely all fiction, poetry, and other imaginative literature, preferring facts. It made him realize, he wrote, the limitations of the thing. It had intelligence, yes, but not human intelligence, for all it had been constructed by a human. And it was for this reason that he gave up his efforts to communicate with the thing. Evidently it did not understand his spoken words, and when he wrote numberless messages and held them for it to see, it made no response. He began to understand that the thing had no point of contact, no common ground, with himself, except in the realm of science.

So he took another course and taught it to handle experiments, to duplicate the simple experiments he performed before it, which it did with ease. Apparently it showed astounding ability along these lines, and could perform highly complex experiments in chemistry and physics without a single error, unhumanly perfect. And finally a day came when his triumph was complete, for the brain performed successfully an experiment that had baffled Detmold himself, as well as all other experimenters. The creature was proving itself greater than its creator.

He wrote that as he watched the flexible, snakelike metal arms flashing about with beaker and test-tube and burner, unerringly, swiftly, he realized that he had constructed an intelligence that was more than human. A mind that was far greater than man's, aided as it was by cold, ruthless reasoning power, precise, perfect memory, and quite unswayed by the thousand and one emotions that affect human intelligence, untroubled by love and hate and fear and joy and sorrow.

Detmold's triumph was complete, and he could return to the mocking world with the metal brain, as he had planned. But the three years of strain and solitude and toil, and this sudden realization of his hopes, were too much for him, and he was stricken with sudden sickness, while he was making one of his infrequent visits to Stockton. For a short time he was cared for at the hospital there, then was taken to Pittsburgh for a necessary operation, which was neatly and successfully performed, but which kept him in a Pittsburgh hospital for more than a month. And back in the house in the hills, the metal brain, conscious, reasoning, planning. . . .

THIS much Lanier learned from entries farther on in the diary. But the first note after that gap of weeks is one of sudden dismay. Detmold had returned, eager to get back to his precious experiment, and had walked into his house to find the laboratory in confusion and the metal brain missing. There were signs of work there, sawed pieces of steel and smashed test-tubes, but no indication of the location of the brain.

From the disjointed entries in the diary, he seemed to have been almost mad with anxiety and rage, for if the thing had been stolen from him, he alone knew the impossibility of replacing it, without years of work. So for days he ranged the forest in search, and on a morning early in June he stumbled on the thing he sought, hidden far back within the hills.

In a circle some hundreds of feet across, trees and shrubs and grass had been cleared away, and the ground stamped down hard and smooth, forming a great clearing, surrounded by a high embankment of earth. And in this circle there was extraordinary activity. Watching from the top of the embankment, he noted first a small, solid-looking machine directly beneath him, constructed of shining, unfamiliar metal. It looked very much like an old-fashioned pump, without the handle, having a spout at its top from which poured a thin stream of molten, gleaming metal, falling into black molds beneath, and solidifying instantly. This small, pumplike structure seemed to be sunken into the earth for an unguessable distance, but the source of the molten metal was a mystery to the wondering Detmold, as also was the use it was intended to serve.

But as he looked about, that, at least, became clearer. For on the farther side of the circle, a half-dozen machines were busy with large lengths of shining metal, similar to those in the molds, fastening them together. And it was these latter busy mechanisms that were even greater mysteries to him for the moment.

They were simply shining globes of the omnipresent metal, perhaps five feet in diameter, provided with six long tentacles or arms, many yards in length, twisting, flexible, busy holding and fastening and tightening, accomplishing an incredible amount of work as he watched. They resembled large octopuses of shining metal, but except for the arms that projected from the globes, were entirely featureless. Those twisting, tapering arms held his attention. They were like—they were like the arms that he had provided the metal brain! As that thought flashed over him, he turned his gaze and saw the brain itself, near the right side of the circle.

The brain—but different. For it moved, possessed the power of motion in any direction, instead of being set on a table, as he had made it. Even as he stared, it seemed to glimpse him, and glided smoothly toward him, across the clearing, its great weight of metal being suspended above the

ground six inches or more by some unknown, unguessed force.

Over it came until it stood motionless beneath that part of the embankment on which Detmold was standing. A black, oval case, more than a yard its greater length, eerily suspended above the ground, contemplating him with its dark lens.

And as Detmold stared back, the explanation of all flashed over him and he cried aloud. He saw that the metal brain had never been stolen from him, that it had, in his absence, discovered a method by which it could move about in that unearthly fashion, and, using that method, and using the tools it had stolen from him, and its own vaulting intelligence, had come to this place and constructed those machines that were working its will. And it was doing—what? Constructing what? Those great lengths of metal on which the tentacle-machines worked, that device that sucked molten metal from the earth itself, all for what?

According to the broken account in the diary he must have stared at the thing for minutes, realizing at last what a monster he had created and set free. Then one of the brain's twisting arms dipped down behind it, and instantly he caught the suggestion of sudden peril, of nearing death, and leaped back behind the embankment. As he did so, he glimpsed the metal arm flashing up with a small globe in its grasp, from which a cloud of yellow gas sprang toward him. He was already over the embankment and the gas touched only a small part of his left hand, but it stung intensely. When he stopped to inspect the hand, a mile away, he was amazed to see that where the gas had touched, the bones of the hand were quite dissolved, without wound or break of skin, leaving two fingers partly boneless and hurting intensely.

And all of the time he stumbled homeward, one word beat through his dazed mind like the stroke of a mighty bell—a word that seemed to be written in letters of flame before his eyes: "Frankenstein."

7

From that point onward, Lanier found the diary almost undecipherable, spotted and torn, with a broken scrawl here and there. There were entries that seemed to indicate that following his discovery of the metal brain's activities, he had not left the house for several days, brooding over what he had seen. There were wild speculations on his part—he constantly accused himself of having loosed a terror on the world, foresaw a metal horde that would sweep over the earth, destroying, conquering, perhaps swinging out to other planets in its irresistible march, a cosmic metal plague. And all his work!

There was a gap of two days in the entries, and the following notes showed that he had spent those two days crouching near the fortress of the metal brain, observing the activity there. He wrote of the tentacle-machines and claimed that they were merely machines, without any trace of brain or intelligence, simply complex, automatic, and self-powered mechanism that were controlled by the metal brain, perhaps by some intricate form of radio-control. But he wrote also of a thing he had not seen on his first glimpse of the clearing, and that was the existence of the cylinders, as he called them throughout. They were just that, gleaming cylinders of metal, some fifty feet in diameter and half again as much in height, provided with two flexible arms on the same principle as the arms of the metal brain and the tentacles of the working-machines, but much larger and longer. And he believed these cylinders to contain some artificial brain like the one he had built, though not so intelligent,

he thought. To think of it! The metal brain was constructing intelligent, similar servants, in addition to the mindless tentacled slave-machines.

There is a note of bitterness in that entry, where he wrote that while the cylinders undoubtedly had been furnished some portion of intelligence by their master, the metal brain, that master had been careful, evidently, not to repeat his own mistake and make them powerful enough to revolt against it. He believed these cylinders to be dependent almost entirely on the metal brain's commands, thought they had been furnished also with a triple, all-seeing eye, set in a small case on their upper surfaces.

And now it was that Detmold first glimpsed the purpose and plans of the brain. For the tentacle-machines had finished their work, and strewn about the clearing lay a number of gigantic columns of metal, smooth and round, whose purpose he could not understand until he saw one of the cylinders, aided by the working-machines and directed by the metal brain, connect the ends of two of those huge columns to its lower surface and then scramble up to a towering height, erect, powerful! Aided by this giant, the other cylinders were soon in position also, and the clearing was filled by a score or more of towering metal giants, who strode about in humanlike steps, under the commands of the comparatively tiny brain beneath.

There was no speculation on his part as to why the metal brain had picked this form for its huge servants, why it had cast on a shape so nearly human. Was it unconscious imitation, mimicry?

For Several days Detmold returned to the clearing and saw the metal giants walking about, testing, drilling. Once he narrowly escaped being stepped on by a great limb and thereafter was more careful. He could not understand the power of locomotion of the things, but set it down to some application of atomic force, discovered by the brain. Almost two weeks after his first discovery of the metal brain's fort, he returned to find it deserted, the tentacle-machines and the metal-pourer lying in a heap at one side. But after a period of beating through the hills on the tracks of the giant fighting-machines, he found the brain's new camp, a grassy basin in the hills, only a few miles from Stockton, where it sat like a spider in a gigantic web, guarded by the metal giants.

It was then that Detmold saw the immediate purpose of the brain, saw that Stockton was marked for annihilation. The writing at that point was tortured, agonized. What could he do? He never considered bringing a force of men from Stockton to deal with the thing, for best of all men he knew the utter futility of such a course. Nor would the story he told have even been listened to in Stockton. Yet the thing must be crushed, and soon.

It would be best, perhaps, to give the last two entries in the diary in full. The first reads:

"I came back through the former camp of the brain today and spent some time examining the tentacle-machines there. As I thought, they are intricate mechanisms, capable of receiving an outside command and translating it into action, but that is all. I examined, too, the machine that produces molten metal and discovered the principle of the thing. It sucks up ordinary earth and separates the metallic atoms in that earth from the non-metallic, and pours out a constant stream of metal in this way. It is mostly aluminum, but inexplicably hardened and reinforced, probably by addition of outside elements. The principle of the thing is fairly simple and I am beginning to understand the power used to move the metal giants. I think that it could be applied differently, more effectively."

And a little farther, the very last entry, tremendous in its implications;

an entry, Lanier noted, that was dated two weeks before:

"I have just thought, if I were able to control those tentacle-machines, what might be done. And why not? The commands of the metal brain were undoubtedly transmitted to them by some form of radio waves, as is the case also with the cylinder things. And if I could control them in the same manner, would I be able—strike at the center——"

The entry stopped there, abruptly, and though Lanier thumbed the pages he found no more writing in the little book. His brain was whirling, but in it was a wild hope, half doubting, half believing. Could such a thing——?

Very carefully he reread certain passages in the diary, striving to calculate the position of the places mentioned. An hour later he was already a few miles from the house, heading toward the spot where he believed was the new camp of the metal brain. Evening was drifting down on the world like a cloud of gray powder, and soon came the thick, obscuring darkness.

That night he slept within a little group of pines, on a heap of gathered boughs, waking only at dawn. He stretched and yawned, then snapped to alertness as a sound came whispering faintly through the forest, a distant, wailing scream.

It came from the direction in which he was heading, and aroused at once, he plunged ahead at top speed. After he had gone the little glade was very silent, except for that distant cry. The chattering birds and squirrels had ceased their tiny clamor, vaguely frightened by the unfamiliar sound. All the creatures of the wild were silent, fearful, listening . . . .

8

A SOUND of crashing trees greeted Lanier as he went on, and then, very much louder, the whistling scream he had already heard, near by, clamorous. Aflame with excitement he pushed on, forced through a cruel growth of briars and down a wooded hillside, emerging with a sudden shock into a grassy basin, more than a half-mile across, level and treeless. And in its center was a great circle that flashed brilliantly in the sunlight, shining, magnificent. A circular, gleaming platform, and on it, hanging a few inches above its surface, a dark, egg-shaped object, with two thin, tapering arms. The metal brain!

An electric shock seemed to pass through Lanier at sight of it. The super-intelligence that was destroying the civilization of man, casting him from his lordship of the world! A metal king on its throne of metal! For the first time Lanier realized the soulless nature of the thing, cold, precise, unhuman, unswerving in purpose, terrible.

Standing near the platform was one of the towering metal giants, and it was from this one that there emanated the screaming signal he had heard. And over at the basin's farther side, where the hills beyond sank down to it in a long, wooded slope, stood another of the great fighting-machines, also motionless.

Lanier sensed a quality of waiting, of expectancy, in the attitude of the brain and its minions. Over beyond that wooded slope, the crashing of trees began again and he wondered if the other metal giants were returning from their raid to the north. Louder, ever louder, became that snapping and roar of falling timber, and now a shape began to loom up at the top of that long slope, a gigantic shape that was moving rapidly toward the basin.

On it came, until its whole bulk was in view, poised on the ridge, and

(Continued on page 860)

The GRINNING MUMMY

by SEABURY QUINN

"Professor Butterbaugh lay on his back, staring with sightless, dead eyes at the glowing globes of the electric chandelier."

"IS THAT you, de Grandin?" I called as the front door's slam was followed by the sound of quick footsteps on the polished boards of the hall floor.

"No!" an irate voice responded as my friend, Professor Frank Butterbaugh, strode into my study. " 'Pologize for comin' in without knockin', Trowbridge," he offered in excuse, "but I'm too confounded mad to pay 'tention to the amenities right now. Look at this, will you? Look at this dam', impertinent——" he broke off, choking with choler, and gave the paper another bellicose flourish. "Of all the unqualified, unmitigated——"

"What is it?" I queried, reaching for the offending document.

"What is it?" he echoed. "It's an outrage, a disgraceful outrage, that's what it is. Listen to this." Snatching at the wide black ribbon looped about his neck, he dragged a pair of gold-and-tortoise-shell pince-nez from the pocket of his white waistcoat, thrust them on his high-bridged nose with a savage, chopping motion, and read in a voice crackling with indignation:

Dr. Frank Butterbaugh,
The Beeches,
Harrisonville, New Jersey.

Dear Dr. Butterbaugh:—

The tombstone you ordered for your lot in Rosedale Cemetery has been prepared in accordance with your directions, and is now ready for delivery. We shall be obliged if you will indicate when you will meet our representative at the cemetery and direct where you wish the monument placed.

In accordance with your order, the stone has been inscribed:

DR. FRANCIS BUTTERBAUGH
August 23. 1852 October 18, 1926
Cave Iram Deorum

Very truly yours,
ELGRACE MONUMENT WORKS.

"Well——" I began, but he shouted me down.

" 'Well', the devil!" he rasped. "It isn't well. I got that note in today's afternoon delivery, and came into town hot-foot to give the Elgrace people boiling hell for writing me such balderdash. Found they'd shut up shop for the day, so got John El-

grace on the 'phone at his house and made the wires sizzle with the dressing-down I gave him, and he had the brass-bound, copper-riveted gall to tell me he'd acted on my orders. *My orders*, d'ye understand? Claimed to have my written authority for preparing a monument for my family plot, and——"

"And he didn't?" I cut in incredulously. "You mean this letter is the first inkling you've had of a tombstone——"

"Sulfur and brimstone, yes!" the professor yelled. "D'ye think I wouldn't have remembered if I'd ordered a headstone for my own grave?—that's what it amounts to, for my name's on the thing. And what the triple-horned devil would I have had today's date cut on it for? Today's October eighteenth, in case you've forgotten it. And why in blazing Tophet should I have anything as silly as '*Cave Iram Deorum*, on my tombstone, even if I had a rush of bone to the head and ordered the dam' thing?"

"Wait a moment, professor," I asked. "I'm a little rusty on my Latin. '*Cave Iram Deoram*'—let's see, that means——"

"It means 'Beware the Wrath of the Gods,' if that's what you're after," he shot back, "but that's of no importance. What I'd like to know is who the devil dared order a tombstone in my name——"

"*Pardonnez-moi, Monsieur*, perhaps it is that someone makes *la mauvaise plaisanterie*—how do you say it? the practical joke?—upon you." Jules de Grandin, very debonair in faultless dinner clothes, a white gardenia in his lapel and a slender ebony walking stick in his hand, stood smiling at us from the study doorway. "Trowbridge, *mon cher*," he turned to me, "I did let myself in without knocking, in order to save the excellent Nora the trouble of opening the door, and I could not well escape overhearing this gentleman's extraordinary statement. Will you not tell me more, *Monsieur?*" He regarded the professor with his round, childishly wide, blue eyes.

"More, more?" Professor Butterbaugh barked. "That's all there is; there isn't any more. Some fool with a perverted sense of humor has forged my name to an order for a tombstone. By Set and Ahriman, I'll be hanged if the Elgrace people get a red-headed cent out of *me* for it! Let 'em find out who ordered it and charge it to him!"

"Pardon, *Monsieur*, I did hear you refer to the malignant deities of Egypt and Persia; is it that you——?"

"Oh, excuse me," I broke in, coming to a tardy recognition of my social obligations. "Professor Butterbaugh, this is Dr. Jules de Grandin, of the University of Paris. Dr. de Grandin, this is Professor Frank Butterbaugh, who headed——"

"*Parbleu*, yes!" de Grandin interrupted, crossing the room hurriedly and seizing Butterbaugh's hand in both of his. "No need for further introductions, Friend Trowbridge. Who has not heard of that peerless savant, that archeologist second only to the great Boussard? The very great honor is entirely mine, *Monsieur*."

Professor Butterbaugh grinned a trifle sheepishly at the Frenchman's enthusiastic greeting, fidgeted with the monument company's letter and his glasses a moment, then reached for his hat and gloves. "Must be movin'," he ejaculated in his queer, disjointed way. "Got to get home before Alice gives me double-jointed fits. Keepin' dinner waitin', you know. Glad to've met you," he held out his hand almost diffidently to de Grandin, "mighty glad. Hope you an' Trowbridge can come over tomorrow. Got an unusual sort o' mummy I'm figurin' on startin' to unwrap

tonight. Like to have you medics there when I expose the body."

"Ah?" de Grandin assented, helping himself to a cigarette. "This mummy, then, it is different——?"

"You bet it is," Butterbaugh assured him colloquially. "Don't believe there's another like it in the country. I've only seen one other of the kind—the one supposed to be Ra-nefer, in the British Museum, you know. It has no funerary statue, just linen and bitumen molded to conform to the body's contours. Had the devil's own time gettin' it out of Egypt, too. Arabs went on strike half a dozen times while we were diggin', Egyptian government tried to collar the body, an', to top the whole business, a gang o' swell-headed young Copts sent me a batch o' black-hand letters, threatenin' all sorts o' penalties unless I returned the thing to its tomb. Huh, catch me givin' up a relic literally worth its weight in gold to a crew o' half-baked Johnnies like that!"

"But, *Monsieur le Professeur,*" de Grandin urged, his diminutive blond mustache bristling with excitement, "this letter, this tombstone order, it may have some relation——"

"Not a chance!" Butterbaugh scoffed. "Egypt's half-way 'round the world from here, and I've no more chance of runnin' foul o' those chaps in this town than I have of bein' bitten by a crocodile; but"—his lips tightened stubbornly and a faint flush deepened the sun-tanned hue of his face—"but if all the Egyptian secret societies from Ghizeh to Beni Hassan were camped on my front lawn, I'd start unwrappin' that mummy tonight. Yes, by Jingo, an' finish the job, too; no matter how much they howled!"

He glowered at us a moment as though he expected us to forbid him, jammed his knockabout hat over his ears, slapped his thigh pugnaciously with his motoring gloves and strode from the study, his back as stiffly straight as though a ramrod had been thrust down the collar of his Norfolk jacket.

"SOMETHING terrible has happened!"

"Eh, what's that?" I muttered stupidly into the transmitter of my bedside telephone, still too immersed in sleep to understand the import of the message coming over the wire.

"This is Alice Butterbaugh, Dr. Trowbridge," the fluttering voice repeated. "Alice Butterbaugh, Professor Butterbaugh's niece. Something dreadful has happened. Uncle Frank's dead!"

"Dead?" I echoed, swinging my feet to the floor. "Why, he was over to my house this evening, and——"

"Yes, I know," she interrupted. "He told me he stopped to show you that mysterious letter he got from the Elgrace company. He was well enough then, doctor, but—but—I think—*he was murdered!* Can you come right over?"

"Of course," I promised, hanging up the receiver and hustling into my clothes.

"De Grandin," I called, opening his door on my way to the bathroom to wash the lingering sleep from my eyes with a dash of cold water, "de Grandin, Professor Butterbaugh is dead—murdered, his niece thinks."

"*Mille tonneres!*" The Frenchman was out of his bed like a jack-in-the-box popping from its case. "The half of one little minute, Friend Trowbridge"—his silk pajamas were torn from his slender white body and he struggled furiously into a white crape union suit—"do you but wait until I have applied the water to my face, the brush to my hair and the wax to my mustache—*nom d'un cochon!* where is that wax?" He had drawn on socks, trousers and boots as he talked, and was already before the washstand, a bath sponge, dripping

with cold water, in one hand, a face towel in the other.

"Fly, my friend, hasten to the telephone and advise the good Sergeant Costello what has occurred," he admonished. "I would that he meets us at the professor's house. *Pardieu,* if some scoundrel has taken the life of that so great scholar, I, Jules de Grandin, will track him down and deliver him to justice—yes, though he take refuge beneath the throne of Satan himself!"

Ten minutes later we were riding furiously toward the sinking moon over the smooth macadam road which led to The Beeches.

HER pretty yellow hair in attractive disorder, an orchid negligée drawn over her filmy nightdress and French-heeled satin mules of the same color on her little white feet, Alice Butterbaugh met us in the wide reception hall of The Beeches, a very much frightened and entirely inarticulate butler at her elbow.

"Oh, Dr. Trowbridge," she sobbed, seizing my arm in both her small hands, "I'm so glad you got here! I——" She started back, folding the negligée across her diaphanous nightrobe as she became aware of de Grandin's presence.

"This is Dr. Jules de Grandin, my dear," I introduced. "He is a member of the faculty of the University of Paris, and has been stopping with me for a while. He will be of great assistance in case it develops your uncle met with foul play."

"How do you do, Dr. de Grandin?" Alice acknowledged, extending her hand. "I am sure you will be able to help us in our trouble."

"*Mademoiselle,*" de Grandin bowed his sleek blond head as he pressed his lips to her fingers, "*commandez-moi; j' suis prêt.*

"And now"—his air of gallantry fell from him like a cloak as he straightened his shoulders—"will you be good enough to take us to the scene and tell us all?"

"I'd gone to bed," the girl began as she led the way toward her uncle's library. "Uncle Frank was terribly excited all afternoon after he received that letter, and when he came back from Harrisonville he was still boiling inwardly. I could hardly get him to eat any dinner. Just as soon as dinner was over he went to the library where he has been keeping the latest addition to his collection of mummies, and told me he was going to begin unpacking it.

"I went to bed about half-past 11 and called good-night to him through the library door as I passed. I went to sleep almost immediately, but something—I don't know what, but I'm sure it was not a noise of any kind—woke me up a few minutes after 2. I lay there trying to get back to sleep until nearly 3, then decided to go to the bathroom for a bromide tablet. As I walked down the passage I noticed a light shining out of the library door into the lower hall, so I knew the door must be open.

"Uncle never left the door unclosed when he was working, for he hated to have the servants look in at him, and they *would* stand in the passage and stare if they thought he was doing anything with his mummies—it seemed to fascinate them. Knowing Uncle's habits, I thought he had gone to bed without shutting off the light, and went down to turn it out. When I got here I found——" She paused beside the door with averted eyes and motioned toward the room beyond.

Professor Butterbaugh lay on his back, staring with sightless, dead eyes at the glowing globes of the electric chandelier, his body straight and stiff, legs extended, arms lying at his sides, as though he had fallen backward from an upright position and remained immovable since his fall. Despite the post-mortem flaccidity of

his features, his countenance retained something of the expression it must have worn when death touched him, and, gazing at his face, it seemed to me he looked more startled than frightened or angry. Nowhere was there evidence of any sort of struggle; not so much as a paper was disturbed on the big, flat-topped desk beside which the dead scientist lay, and the only witness testifying to tragedy was the still, inert remnant of what had been one of the world's foremost Egyptologists some three or four hours before.

"Beg pardon, Miss Alice," the pale-faced man-servant, trousers and coat pulled over his night-clothes, tiptoed toward the professor's niece, "there's a gentleman outside, a Sergeant Costello, from the police department——"

"The police!" the girl's pallid face went paler still. "Wh—what are the police doing here—who told them?"

"I—I don't know, Miss," the serving man stammered.

"I did notify the good sergeant, *Mademoiselle,*" de Grandin announced, looking up from beside the professor's body.

"Send him to me at once, immediately, right away," he ordered the butler, and walked quickly to the door to greet the burly, red-headed Irishman.

"*Holà,* my friend," he called as the detective crossed the hall, "we have here a wicked business to investigate. Some miscreant has struck down your famous fellow townsman from the back, and——"

"H'm, from th' back, is it?" Costello replied, looking meditatively at Butterbaugh's supine form. "An' how d'ye make that out, Dr. de Grandin? Seems to me there's no marks o' violence on th' body at all, an' th' pore gentleman died from natural causes. Apoplexy, it was, belike. He was a peppery-tempered old divil, God rest his soul!"

"Apoplexy, yes," de Grandin agreed with a mirthless smile, "since apoplexy is only a general name for the condition more definitely called cerebral hemorrhage. Behold the cause of this apoplexy, my friend." Stooping, he raised the professor's head, pointing to the occipital region. Against the dead man's smoothly brushed iron-gray hair lay a stain of blood, scarcely larger than a twenty-five cent piece, and so meager in its moisture that the Turkish rug on which the head had rested showed hardly any discoloration. Parting the hair, de Grandin showed a small, smooth-edged wound about the caliber of an ordinary lead-pencil, a bit of whitish substance welling up to the very edge of the opening and all but stopping any blood-flow from inside the head.

"Gun?" Costello bent to examine the puncture.

"I do not think so," the Frenchman replied. "Had a shot been fired from a pistol at close range or a rifle from a distance the bullet would probably have gone out of the head, yet there is only one wound here. Had a firearm of low power, unable to drive the missile through the head, been used, the bone would have shattered at the point of entrance, yet here we have a clean-cut wound. No, my friend, this injury is the result of some hand-weapon. Besides, Mademoiselle Butterbaugh was in the house, as were also the servants, yet none recalls having heard a shot fired.

"*Mademoiselle,*" he rose from his examination of the body, "you did mention that your uncle was unwrapping a certain mummy tonight. This mummy, where is it, if you please?"

"I—I don't know," the girl faltered. "I thought it was in here, but——"

"But it is not," de Grandin supplied dryly. "Come, *mes amis,* let us search for this missing cadaver.

There are times when the dead can tell us more than the living."

We crossed the library, passed between a pair of heavy brocade curtains, and entered a smaller room walled with smooth plaster, its only furniture being a series of glass cases containing small specimens of Egyptiana and a rank of upright mummy cases standing straight and sentinel-like against the farther wall. "Howly mither!" Costello exclaimed, his native brogue cutting through his acquired American accent, as he pointed one hand toward one of the mummy cases, signing himself piously with the cross with the other.

The center figure in the rank of mummies stood in a case somewhat taller than its fellows, and, unlike the others, was not hidden from view by a coffin lid, for the cover from its case had fallen to the floor, disclosing the mummy to our gaze. The body had been almost entirely denuded of its bandages, the face, arms and lower portion of the legs having been freed, so that, had it been a living man instead of a corpse, neither walking nor the use of the arms would have been impeded by the linen bands which remained in place. This much I saw at a glance, but the cause of Costello's outcry was not plain until I had looked a second time. Then I added my amazed gasp to the big Irishman's exclamation, for in the right hand of the dead thing was firmly grasped a rod of polished wood tipped by a hawk's head executed in metal, the bird's beak being some three inches in length, curved and sharp as the hooked needles used by upholsterers to sew heavy fabrics. Upon the metal point of the beak was a faintly perceptible smear of blood, and a drop of the grisly liquid had fallen to the floor, making a tiny, dark-red stain at the mummy's desiccated feet.

And on the mummy's face, drawn by the embalming process into a sort of sardonic grin, was another reddish smear, as though the dead thing had bent its lips to the wound inflicted by the instrument clutched in its dead hand.

"*Pardieu,* Friend Trowbridge, I think we need look no farther for the weapon which took Monsieur Butterbaugh's life," de Grandin commented, twisting the end of his mustache with a nervous gesture.

"Wuz this th' mummy th' professor wuz workin' on?" Costello demanded, turning to the butler, who had followed us to the door of the specimen room.

"Oh, my Gawd!" the servant exclaimed with a shudder as he beheld the armed and sneering cadaver standing in its case, one mummified foot slightly advanced, as though the thing were about to step into the room in search of fresh victims.

"Never mind th' bawlin'," Costello ordered; "answer me question. Wuz this th' mummy Professor Butterbaugh wuz unwrappin, when—when it happened to him?"

"I don't know, sir," the servant quavered. "I never saw the thing before, an', s'welp me Gawd, I never want to see it again. But I think it must be the one Dr. Butterbaugh had in mind, for there are five mummies there now, and this mornin', when I came in to open the blinds, there were only four standin' against the walls and one was layin' on the floor over by the door."

"Humph, guess this is th' one, then," Costello replied. "Go outside there an' git th' other servants. Tell 'em I want to question 'em, an' *don't tell what you've seen here.*"

De Grandin walked quickly to the grinning mummy and examined the pointed instrument in its hand minutely. "*Très bien,*" he murmured to himself, giving the relic room a final appraising glance.

"Aren't you going to look into those other mummy cases?" I asked as he turned to leave.

"Not I," he denied. "Let Sergeant Costello busy himself with them. Me, I have other matters of more importance to attend to. Come, let us examine the servants."

The cook, a large and very frightened negress, a diminutive and likewise badly frightened colored boy who tended the garden and acted as chauffeur, two white maids, both safely past the heydey of youth, and the butler composed the domestic staff of The Beeches. Costello marshaled them in line and began a series of searching questions, but de Grandin, after a single look at the crowd, approached the sergeant and excused himself, saying we would talk the matter over the following morning.

"Thank you, sor," Costello acknowledged: "I take it kindly of ye to see that I got th' first look-in on this case before anny of th' newspaper boys had a chanst to spoil it. I'll be comin' over to your house tomorrow an' we'll go over all th' evidence together, so we will."

"*Très excellent,*" de Grandin agreed. "Good night, Sergeant. I am not sure, but I think we shall soon have these murderers beneath the lock and key of your so efficiently strong jail."

"Murderers?" Costello echoed. "Ye think there wuz more'n one of 'em, then, sor?"

"*Parbleu,* yes; I know it," de Grandin responded. "Good night, *mon vieux.*"

"WELL, Dr. de Grandin," Sergeant Costello announced as he entered my office the following afternoon, "we've got about as far as we can with th' case."

"Ah," de Grandin smiled pleasantly as he pushed a box of cigars across the table, "and what have you discovered, *cher Sergent?*"

"Well, sor," the Irishman grinned deprecatingly, "I can't rightly say we've found out much of annythin', precisely. F'rinstance, we've found that somebody forged Professor Butterbaugh's signature to th' letter to th' Elgrace Monument Works. We put it under a lens at headquarters today, an' you can see where th' name's been traced as plain as daylight."

"Yes," de Grandin encouraged. "And have you any theory as to who forged that letter, or who killed the professor?"

"No, sor, we haven't," the detective confessed. "Between you an' me, sor, that Miss Alice may know more about th' business than she lets on. I wouldn't say she wuz exactly glad to see me when I come last night, an', an'—well, she hasn't been anny too helpful. This mornin', when I wuz puttin' th' servants through their paces agin, to see if there wuz anny discrepancies between th' stories they told last night an' what they might be sayin' this time, she ups an' says, says she, 'Officer,' she says, 'you've been over all that before,' she says, 'an' I'll not have my servants hu-milly-ated,' she says, 'by havin' you ask 'em every few hours which one of 'em killed me uncle.'

"So I ups an' says, 'All right, Miss. I don't suppose *you* have anny suspicions concernin' who killed him?' An' she says, "Certainly *not!*' just like that. An' that wuz that, sor.

"Now, don't you be gittin' me wrong, Dr. de Grandin an' Dr. Trowbridge. Miss Butterbaugh is a high-toned lady, an' all that, an' I'm not makin' anny wise cracks about her bein' guilty, or even havin' guilty knowledge; but——"

The sharp staccato of my office 'phone cut his statement in half. "Hello?" I called tentatively, as I lifted the receiver.

"Sergeant Costello; I want to speak to Sergeant Costello," an excited voice demanded. "This is Schultz speaking."

"All right," I replied, passing the instrument to the sergeant.

"Hello?" Costello growled. "Yes, Schultz, this is Costello, what's—*what?* When? Oh, it did, did it? Yes, you bet your sweet life I'll be right over, an' you'd best git busy and cook up a sweet young alibi by th' time I git there, too, young felly me lad!

"Gentlemen," he turned a blank face to us, "that wuz Schultz, th' uniformed man I'd left on duty at Th' Beeches. He tells me that mummy—th' one with th' little pickax in its hand—has disappeared from th' house, right before his eyes."

"*Tous les démons!*" de Grandin cried, springing from his chair. "I expected this. Come, my friends; let us hasten, let us speed, let us fly! *Parbleu,* but the trail may not yet have grown cold!"

"I was making my rounds, as you told me, sir," Patrolman Schultz explained to Sergeant Costello. "I'd been through the house and looked in on that queer-lookin' mummy in the little room, and seen everything was in order, then I went out to the garage. Julius, the chauffeur, was telling me that he was going to quit his job as soon as the police investigation was done, 'cause he wouldn't dare live here after what's happened, and I was wondering if he was suffering from a guilty conscience, or what, so I stopped to talk to him and see what he'd say. I couldn't a' been outside more than fifteen minutes, all told, and I came right back in the house; but that mummy was clean gone when I got back."

"Oh, it wuz, wuz it?" Costello answered sarcastically. "I don't suppose you heard it hollerin' for help while it wuz bein' kidnaped, or annythin' like that while you wuz out Sherlock Holmesin' th' chauffeur, did you? O' course not! You wuz too busy playin' Ol' King Brady to pay attention to your regular duties. Well, now, young felly, let me tell you somethin'. We'll find that missin' mummy, an' we'll find him toot sweet, as Dr. de Grandin would say, or badge number six hundred an' eighty-seven will be turned in at headquarters tonight, d'ye git me?"

He turned on his heel and walked toward the house, leaving the crestfallen young patrolman staring helplessly after him.

We were about to follow him when the rattle of a Ford delivery wagon on the gravel driveway drew our attention. A young man in white apron and jacket jumped from the machine and approached the service porch, a basket of groceries on his arm.

"Sorry to keep your order waitin'," he told the cook as he handed her the hamper and a duplicate sales slip for her signature, "but I liked ta got kilt comin' up th' road about twenty minutes ago. I was drivin' out th' pike slow an' easy when a big touring car shot outa th' lane an' crowded me into the ditch. If I hadn't had my foot on th' gas an' been able to skedaddle outa th' way before they ran me down I'd most likely a' been killed, an' maybe th' cake-eater an' Sheba in th' other car, as well."

"Where was it you had this so close escape?" de Grandin asked, approaching the youth with an ingratiating smile.

"Down th' road a piece," the other replied, nothing loth to dilate on his adventure. "You know, there's a lane that skirts th' edge of Professor Butterbaugh's place an' runs out to th' pike near Twin Pines. There's a tall hedge growin' on each side of th' lane where it comes out on th' pike, an' these folks musta been throwin' a neckin' party or sumpin up there, for they was runnin' in low—kind o' sneakin along—not makin' a bit o' noise till they was within a

few feet of th' main road, then they stepped on her for fair, an' come out into th' highway runnin' like a scairt dawg."

"Indeed?" de Grandin raised sympathetic eyebrows. "And did you notice the people in this car? They should be arrested for such actions."

"I'll say I noticed 'em," the grocery boy answered with an emphatic nod. "The sheik who was drivin' was one o' them lounge-lizards with patent leather hair, an' th' jane was little an' dark, with big eyes an' a sort o' sneery look. She was holdin' sumpin in her lap; looked like it might o' been another girl's head, or sumpin. Anyways, it was all covered up with cloth. An' they didn't even excuse theirselves for crowdin' me into the ditch; just went on down th' road toward Morristown like greased lightnin'."

De Grandin's little mustache was twitching with eagerness, like the whiskers of a tom-cat before a rat-hole, but his voice was casual as he asked, "And did you notice the number of this car which so nearly wrecked you, *mon petit?*"

"Whassat?" the other replied suspiciously.

"Did you make note of their license plate?"

"You betcha," the lad produced a brown-paper-backed note-book, obviously intended for emergency orders from his patrons, and thumbed through its dog-eared leaves. "Yep, here it is: Y 453-677-5344. New Jersey plate."

"Ah, my excellent one, my incomparable little cabbage!" de Grandin restrained himself from kissing the white-aproned youth with the utmost difficulty. "My Napoleon among *épiciers*—behold, I shall make restitution for the fright these miscreants have given you!" From his trousers pocket he produced a billfold and extracted a five-dollar note, which he pressed into the delivery boy's hand. "Take it, my wise one," he urged, quite unnecessarily. "Take it and buy a plaything for one of your numerous sweethearts. *Pardieu,* such a well-favored youth must play the devil with the maidens' hearts, *n'est-ce-pas?*" He thrust a playful finger into the astonished youngster's ribs.

"Sure," the other responded, pocketing the bill and backing away rather hastily. "Sure, I gotta jane; d'ye think I'm a dead one?"

"*Nom d'un coq,* quite otherwise; you do possess the eye of Argus and the sagacity of Solon, *mon brave,*" de Grandin assured him, then, to me:

"Come, Trowbridge, my friend, let us fly with all celerity to the lane of which this so charming urchin has told us. Let us discover what we can see!"

We ran across the wide lawn to the tall, rank-growing privet hedge which marked the margin of the Butterbaugh place, slipped through the shrubbery, and began walking slowly down the unpaved roadway.

"*Nom de Dieu,* we have it!" the Frenchman exclaimed, pointing dramatically to the soft sand at our feet. "Behold, Friend Trowbridge, where a car, even as described by the youthful Solomon, has been driven up this path and turned about at this point. Also, observe how two pairs of feet, one shod in wide-soled shoes, the other in slippers with the French heels, have walked from that car to the hedge, and—here, do you not see it?—back again, *and with wider steps and deeper impressions in the earth. Parbleu,* my friend, our noses are to the earth. Anon we shall bring the quarry into view!"

Slipping through the hedge, he ran at top speed to the house, entered one of the open French windows and called excitedly for Costello.

"Quick, *mon vieux,*" he urged when the sergeant came in answer to his repeated hails, "we must delay the expedition. I would that you

broadcast by telephone an alarm to all towns and villages in the direction of Morristown to have a touring car bearing the New Jersey license Y 453-677-5344 stopped at all costs. It must be delayed, it must be held, it must be impeded until I arrive!"

Costello regarded him in open-mouthed wonder, but proceeded to telephone headquarters to post a general lookout for the wanted car.

"An' now, Dr. de Grandin, sor," he whispered, "if you'd be good enough to lend me a bit of a hand in questionin' these here servants, I believe we could git somethin' outa them. They're beginnin' to weaken."

"Ah, bah," de Grandin replied. "Waste not your breath on these innocent ones, my friend. We shall be within reaching distance of these criminals when that car has been apprehended. In truth, they did fit the description to a perfection."

"Description?" echoed the sergeant. "What description? Has someone been spillin' th' beans to you, sor?"

"Ha, yes, someone has talked to me, in silence," de Grandin replied. "There were at least two people in the library with Professor Butterbaugh when he was killed, and one of them, at least, had straight hair, smoothed down with some sort of unguent—hair, moreover, which had been cut about two weeks ago. This person must have been somewhat shorter than the professor, and must have stood immmediately before him when he was struck down from behind——"

Sergeant Costello looked at him a moment in speechless wonder, then an ingratiating grin spread over his face. He rose, facing de Grandin with upraised forefinger, like an adult telling a fable to a dubious youngster. "An' th' wolf said to Little Red Riding Hood, 'Where are ye goin', me prett-ty child,'" he interrupted. "I've seen ye do a lot o' things which I'd a' thought wuz magic if I hadn't seen 'em with me own two eyes, Dr. de Grandin," he confessed, "but when ye go into a trance like that an' begin fortune-tellin' about how many people wuz present when th' professor was kilt, an' how long it had been since one of 'em had his hair cut, I'm havin' to remind ye that it's been many a year since I believed in fairy-tales, sor."

"Fairy-tales, do you say?" de Grandin returned good-naturedly. "*Parbleu,* my friend, do not you know that the most improbable of the tales of the fairies is sober logic itself beside the seemingly impossible miracles which science performs each day? *Nom d'un porc,* a hundred years ago men were hanged as wizards for knowing not one-tenth as much as Jules de Grandin has forgotten these twenty years!

"Amuse yourself, *cher Sergent.* Question the servants to your heart's content; but be ready to accompany me the minute that missing car is reported caught, I do entreat you."

"It's th' Templeton police department speakin', Dr. de Grandin," Costello announced some three-quarters of an hour later as he looked up from the telephone. "Will ye be talkin' to 'em, sor? Sure, I haven't th' ghost of an idea what it is you're wantin' with th' young lad and lady that wuz ridin' in th' car ye wanted held up."

"*Allo, allo!*" de Grandin barked into the telephone as he snatched the receiver from the sergeant's hand. "This is Jules de Grandin speaking, *Monsieur le Chef.* You have the occupants of that car in custody? *Bien,* you do delight me! Charge? *Parbleu,* I had forgotten that you require a specific charge on which to hold persons in custody in this country. Tell me, *Monsieur,* you have searched that car, no?" A pause, during which he drummed nervously

on the telephone table with the tips of his slender white fingers, then:

"Ah, so? *Très bien,* I and Sergeant Costello, of the Harrisonville police, come on the wings of the wind to relieve you of your prisoners. Responsibility? But of course. Hold them, my friend. Place them under the double lock, with gendarmes at door and window, and I shall indubitably indemnify you against all responsibility. Only, I beseech you, hold them in safety until we arrive."

He turned to us, his small blue eyes sparkling with excitement. "Come, my friends, come away; let us make haste to that commandant of police at Templeton. He has there the birds for our cage!"

We jumped into my waiting car and turned toward Templeton, Costello sitting in the tonneau, a black cigar at a rakish angle in his mouth, an expression of doubt on his face; de Grandin beside me, drumming on the leather upholstery of the seat and humming excitedly to himself.

"What's it all about, de Grandin?" I asked as, responding to his urging, I pressed my foot on the accelerator and drove the machine several miles beyond the legal speed.

"Mean? Mean?" he answered, turning a twitching face and dancing eyes on me. "Possess yourself in patience, my friend. Restrain your curiosity for only a few little minutes. Curb your inquisitiveness only so long as it takes this abominably slow *moteur* to convey us to that police chief at Templeton. Then—*parbleu!*—you shall know. Yes, *par la barbe du prophète,* you and the good Costello, too, shall know all—all!" He threw back his head and burst into a snatch of marching song:

"Elle rit, c'est tout l' mal qu'elle sait faire,
Madelon, Madelon, Madelon!"

"We've got 'em locked in there," the Templeton police chief told us when I brought my panting motor to a halt before the little town's near graystone municipal building. "Far's I can see, there's no charge you can hold 'em on, legally, and there's apt to be some trouble over this business.

"Sure, we found a mummy in the car"—in response to de Grandin's eager question—"but I don't know any law against transporting a mummy through the streets. Go in and talk to 'em, if you want to, but make it snappy, and remember; if there's any comeback about a false arrest or anything like that, it's strictly your funeral."

"*Parbleu, Monsieur le Chef,*" de Grandin replied with a smile, "it is like to be a double funeral, with the State of New Jersey officiating, unless Jules de Grandin is more mistaken than he thinks he is!"

Two people, a young man of twenty-five or twenty-six and a young woman of about the same age, sat on the polished oak benches of the municipal council room which the Templeton police chief had turned into an improvised dungeon for their detention. The man was dressed with that precise attention to detail which characterizes the better-class foreigner, while the woman's modish traveling costume was more reminiscent of the Rue de la Paix than of the dressmakers of America. Both were dark-skinned with the clear olive complexion of the South, black-eyed, and patrician of feature. And despite their air of hauteur, they were plainly ill at ease.

"This is an outrage!" the man burst forth in a perfectly accentless voice which proclaimed more plainly than faulty speech that the words he used were not of his mother tongue. "This is an outrage, sir. What right have you to hold us here against our will?"

De Grandin fixed him with a level stare, rigid and uncompromising as a

pointed bayonet. "And the murder of a respected citizen of this country, *Monsieur,*" he asked, "is that, perhaps, not also an outrage?"

"What do you mean——?" the man began, but the Frenchman cut him off curtly.

"You and your companion did enter the house of Professor Francis Butterbaugh last night, or, more definitely, early this morning," he replied, "and one of you did engage him in conversation while the other took the scepter of Isis from the wrappings of the mummy and struck him with it, —from behind. Do not lie to me, my Egyptian friend; your tongue may be false—*cordieu,* are you not a nation of liars?—but the hairs of your head tell the truth. *Parbleu,* you did not think that your victim would throw out his arm at the moment you murdered him and seize evidence which would put the rope of justice about your necks. You did not apprehend that I, Jules de Grandin, would be at hand to deliver you to the public executioner, *hein?*"

The prisoners stared at him in astonished silence. Then: "You have no proof that we were near Butterbaugh's house last night," the man answered, moving a step toward a sheeted object which lay on one of the council benches.

De Grandin smiled unpleasantly. "No proof, do you say?" he returned. "*Pardieu,* I have all the proof needed to put you both to a shameful death. I have—Trowbridge, Costello, stop him!"

He flung himself at the prisoner, who had rounded the end of the bench and reached suddenly toward the thing under the sheet, drawn forth a tiny, wriggling object, and pressed it quickly to his wrist.

"Too late," the man observed, holding out his hand to the woman beside him and sinking to the bench beside the sheeted object. "Dr. Jules de Grandin is too late!"

The young woman hesitated the fraction of a second as her fingers met those of her companion, then, with widening eyes, thrust her hand into the low-cut bosom of her dress, drew herself up very straight, and, as a slight shiver ran through her frame, dropped to the bench beside the man.

"*Dieu et le diable!*" de Grandin swore furiously. "You have cheated me! I—back, Friend Trowbridge, back, *Sergent;* there is death on the floor!"

He cannoned into me, sending me stumbling toward the row of council seats, poised himself on tiptoe, and leaped lithely into the air, coming down with both feet close together, grinding his heels savagely on the floor. Beneath the edge of his boot sole I made out the sharp-pointed, thrashing end of some small, cylindrical object.

"Five thousand years of life in death, and now eternal death beneath the feet of Jules de Grandin," he announced, stepping back and revealing a short, black thing, scarcely thicker through its crushed body than an angle worm, and no longer than a man's hand.

"What is it, sor?" Costello queried, looking at the still-writhing thing disclosed by the Frenchman's lifted foot.

"I blame you not for failing to recognize him, *cher Sergent,*" the other replied; "the good St. Patrick did drive him and all his family from your native land some fifteen hundred years ago."

To me he said: "Friend Trowbridge, before you lies what remains of such a snake as did kill Cleopatra, no less. To discourage robbers from the graves of their great ones, I have heard, the Egyptians did sometimes secrete the comatose bodies of serpents among the wrappings of their mummies. I have often heard such tales, but never before have I seen evidence of their truth. Like the

toad and the frog, who are found alive within fossil rocks, the snake has the ability to live indefinitely in suspended animation. When these miscreants did expose this viper to the air he was revived, and I make no doubt they allowed him to live against just such a contingency as this.

"Do you desire more proof? Is not their double suicide a confession sufficient of guilt?" He turned questioning eyes from Costello to me, then glared at the prisoners shivering on the bench beside the sheeted object.

"What's this?" Costello demanded, striding to the seat where the man and woman sat and snatching the sheet from the form beside them.

"Howly St. Judas, 'tis th' grinnin' mummy itself!" he exclaimed as he bared the sardonically smiling features of the thing we had seen in Professor Butterbaugh's relic room the night of his murder.

"But of course," de Grandin replied, "what else? Did I not surmise as much when that young groceryman told us of the fleeing couple in the motor car? And did I not have you send out the alarm for the detention of that same car? And did I not particularly question the police chief of this city concerning the presence of a mummy in the motor when he did inform me that he had apprehended our fugitives? Most assuredly. Me, I am Jules de Grandin. I do not make mistakes."

He directed a quizzical gaze at the prisoners. "Your time grows short," he stated. "Will you confess now, or must I assure you that I shall cut your hearts from out your dead bodies and feed them to carrion crows? Remember, I am a medical man, and my request that I be allowed to perform an autopsy on you will unquestionably be honored. You will confess, or——" he waved an eloquent hand, the gesture expressing unpleasant possibilities.

The man twisted his thin lips in a mirthless grin. "You may as well know," he replied, "but we must be assured our ashes will be taken to Egypt for burial before I tell you anything."

The Frenchman raised his hand. "You have my assurance of that if you tell all, and my equal assurance that you shall be dissected as subjects of anatomical study if you do not," he promised. "Come, begin. Time presses and there is much to tell. Make haste."

"IT DOES not matter who we are, you can find our names and residences from our papers," the prisoner began. "As to what we are, you have perhaps heard of the movement to revive the secret worship of the old gods of Egypt among those who trace their ancestry to the ancient rulers of the earth?"

De Grandin nodded shortly.

"We are members of that movement," the man continued. "We Copts possess the blood of Ramses, mighty ruler of the world, of Tut-ankh-amen and Ra-nefer; our race was old and glorious when Babylon was a swamp and you Franks were only naked savages. Pagan Greek and pagan Roman, Christian Frank and Moslem Arab—all have swarmed in upon us, forcing their religions down our throats at the sword's point, but our hearts have remained constant to the gods we worshiped in the days of our greatness. For centuries a faithful few have done honor to Osiris and Isis, to Horus and Nut and Anubis and mighty, ram-headed Ra, father of gods and fashioner of men; but only in recent years, with the weakening of the Moslems' hated power, have we dared extend our organization. Today we have a complete hierarchy. I am a vowed servant of Osiris, my sister here is a dedicated priestess of Isis.

"That the barbarians of Europe and America should delve among the tombs of our illustrious dead and drag their sacred relics forth for fools to gape at has long been intolerable to us—as the violation of the tombs of Napoleon or Washington would be to French or Americans—but for years we have been forced to suffer these insults in silence. Before this robber, Butterbaugh, desecrated the tomb of Ankh-ma-amen"—he motioned toward the uncovered, grinning mummy on the bench beside him—"our priesthood had passed sentence of death on all who despoiled our burying places in future. The Englishman, Carnarvon, died by our orders; other tomb-robbers met their just deserts at our hands. Now you knew why Butterbaugh was executed.

"We gave the thieving savage fair warning of our intent before he took the stolen body out of Egypt, but the English police—may Set burn them!—prevented our carrying out our sentence there, so we followed him to America. We had obtained a specimen of his signature in Cairo, it was easy to forge his name to the order for his tombstone.

"Last night my sister and I waited outside his house until his servants had gone to bed. We watched the thief gloating over the body of our sacred dead, saw him unwind the sacerdotal wrappings from it, and while he was still at his ghoulish work we entered an open window and read him the death sentence pronounced on him by the council of our priests. The grave-robber ordered us from his house—threatened us with arrest, and would have assaulted me, but my sister, who stood behind him, struck him dead with a single blow of the holy scepter of Isis which he had taken from the cerements of the body outraged by his profane hands.

"We restored the body of Ankh-ma-amen to its case and were about to take it to our car, that we might carry it back to its tomb in Egypt, when we heard someone moving about up-stairs and had to make our escape. We put the scepter of Isis in the hand of our ancestor, for it was to avenge his desecrated tomb that we put Butterbaugh to death. A smear of the robber's blood was on my sister's hand, and she wiped it off on Ankh-ma-amen's lips. It was poetic justice; our outraged countryman drank the blood of his ravisher!

"Today we returned and took our dead from the polluting atmosphere of Butterbaugh's house—while your stupid police looked on and saw nothing.

"How you discovered us we do not know, but may the lightnings of Osiris blast you; may Apepi, the serpent, crush your bones and the pestilence of Typhon wither your flesh! May——"

A convulsive shudder ran through him, he half rose from the bench, then slid forward limply, his hands clutching futilely at the withered hands of the mummy which grinned sardonically into his face.

I glanced hastily toward the girl, who had sat silent during her brother's narrative. Her jaw had dropped, her head sagged forward on her breast, and her eyes stared straight before her with the inane, fixed stare of the newly dead.

De Grandin studied the three bodies before us a long moment, then turned to Costello. "You will make what report is necessary, my friend?" he asked.

"Sure, I will, sor," the detective assented, "an' I got to hand it to ye for cleanin' up th' mystery so neat, too; but, beggin' your pardon, how d'ye intend makin' good on your promise to ship these here dead corpses back home?"

De Grandin smiled quickly. "Did you not hear him demand my promise to ship his *ashes* to Egypt?" he asked. "When the official formalities

are concluded, we shall have them cremated."

"EXCUSE me for botherin' you, Dr. de Grandin," Costello apologized as we concluded dinner at my house that evening, "but I ain't eddycated like you an' Dr. Trowbridge here, an' there's a lot o' things that's plain as A B C to you gentlemen that don't seem to mean nothin' at all to me. Would you mind tellin' me how you figured this here case out so easy, an' "—his florid face went a shade redder—"an' excuse me for tryin' to git funny with you this afternoon when you wuz tellin' th' kind o' hair th' gink we must find had?"

"Yes, de Grandin," I urged, "tell us; I'm as much in the dark as Sergeant Costello."

"Glory be," the Irishman exclaimed fervently, "then I'm not th' only dumb-bell in th' party!"

De Grandin turned his quick, elfish smile on each of us in turn, then knocked the ashes from his cigar into his coffee cup.

"All men have two eyes—unless they have one," he began, "and all see the same things; but not all do know what it is that they see.

"When we did go to that Professor Butterbaugh's house after he had been murdered, I did first observe the size, appearance and location of the wound whereof he died; next I did look very carefully about to see what autograph his murderers had left. Believe me, my friends, all criminals leave their visiting cards, if only the police can read them.

"*Très bien,* I did find that in the professor's right hand were clutched four or five short, black hairs—straight, glossy hairs, with traces of pomade still upon them.

"Now, at the *Faculté de Médicine Légal,* to which I have the honor to belong, we have spent much time in the study of such things. We know, for example, that in case of sudden death, especially where there has been injury done the nervous system, the body undergoes an instantaneous rigidity, making the dead hand grasp and firmly hold any object within its reach. Thus we have found soldiers, shot on the field of battle, firmly holding their rifles; suicides clutching the pistols with which they have ended their lives, or, occasionally, drowned bodies grasping grass, weeds or gravel. Also we have learned that fragments of clothing, hair or other foreign substances clutched in a dead man's hand—unless they be from his own attire or person—indicate the presence of some other person at the instant of death, and hence point to murder rather than suicide.

"Again, we have paid much attention to the evidence borne by the location of wounds. Friend Trowbridge,"—he turned to me—"will you be so good as to take up that spoon, stand behind me, and make as though you would dash out my brains with it?"

Wonderingly, I picked up a spoon, placed myself behind him, and struck him quickly, though lightly, on the head.

"*Bon, très bon!*" he exclaimed. "Make careful note where your blow did fall, my friend.—Now, *Sergent,* will you do likewise?"

Costello obeyed, and I could not repress a start of surprize. The blow struck by Costello came into contact with the Frenchamn's sleek light hair less than an inch from where my spoon had struck.

"You see?" de Grandin grinned delightedly. "Almost always it is so. Wounds of the head from axes, hammers and the like are almost invariably found on the left parietal area if the assailant is in front, if he stands behind his victim the injury will usually be found on the right side of the occiput—where both of you unconsciously struck me.

"Very well. When I did examine Professor Butterbaugh's death-wound I knew he was struck down from behind.

"Excellent, so far. But if he was killed from the back, how came those hairs grasped in his hand? He could not have reached behind to seize his murderer, the hairs would not have been so clutched had the murderer first confronted him, then rushed behind to strike the fatal blow, and that wound could not possibly have been given by one standing before him. *Voilà,* there were two persons, at least, present when the professor died.

"The weapon used we found in the hand of that mummy which did grin like the cats of Cheshire, and on his lips we found a smear of blood. That, coupled with the professor's experiences in Egypt, the so mysterious tombstone which he had not ordered, and which said, 'Beware the Wrath of the Gods,' and the fact that no robbery had been attempted—all convinced me it was a killing of revenge.

"*C'est beau!* I did examine those hairs under the microscope while my good Trowbridge slept that night. Their color and texture excluded the possibility of their belonging to the professor or to any of his servants, they could not have come from the mummy's head, for he was shaven-pated, and the condition of their ends —which was slightly rounded—showed they had been cut by a barber some two weeks hence.

"I say to me: 'Suppose some person have come from Egypt to kill this Professor Butterbaugh; suppose he have come on the sea some three or four weeks; suppose, again, he are a wealthy, fastidious man, what would be one of the first things he would do when he came to shore?'

"I answer: '*Parbleu,* he would undoubtlessly have his hair cut!'

" 'Correct,' I reply. 'And could he arrange to kill the professor and order a tombstone in two weeks?'

" 'He could," I respond.

"Very well. I have argued so far with myself and decided we must look for two people, one of them, at least, with brunette hair which have been cut some two weeks ago, both of them, probably, dark-skinned, because they are probably Egyptian, but not black, because the hair say he belong to a white man.

"Where shall we find these murderers in a nation of one hundred million people of many different complexions?

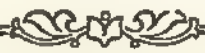
" 'I do not know; but I shall try,' I promise me, and then—*cordieu!*—and then we meet that so charming lad from the grocery shop who tells us of the couple in the speeding car and of the young woman who holds some wrapped-up thing in her lap.

"The mummy is missing, these people speed, there are wheel tracks and footprints of a most suspicious kind in the lane by the professor's house—Friend Trowbridge and I have seen them—*parbleu,* why are not these two runaways the persons we seek?

"We did seek them, my friends, and we did find them; and though that ancient snake did cheat your executioner, we did exact their lives in payment for that of Professor Butterbaugh."

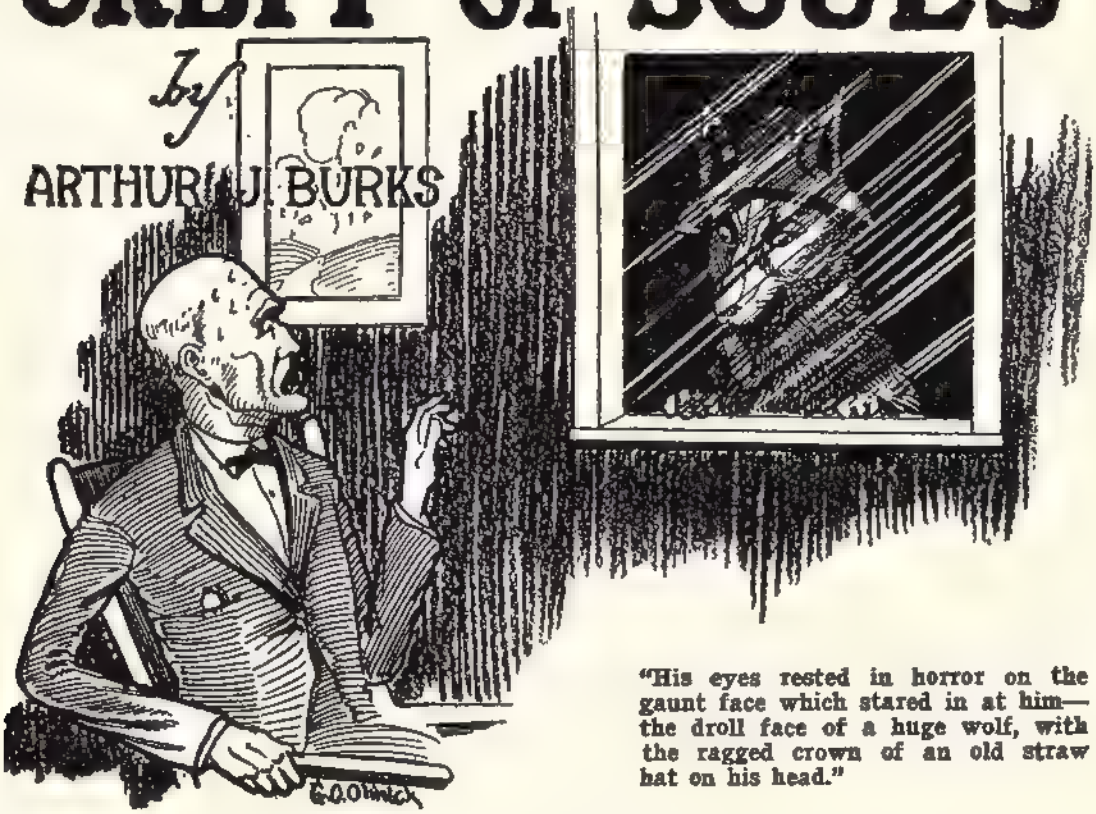
He smiled contentedly as he resumed his seat and poured a thimbleful of glowing crême de menthe over the crushed ice in his liqueur glass.

"Justice, my friends," he pronounced, "she is hard to evade. When she are accompanied by Jules de Grandin—*grand Dieu,* she are invincible!"



ORBIT of SOULS

by ARTHUR J. BURKS



"His eyes rested in horror on the gaunt face which stared in at him—the droll face of a huge wolf, with the ragged crown of an old straw hat on his head."

SLEEK, well-fed, with the merest suggestion of a paunch, old Adam Crabtree sat in comfort behind his clean-topped desk on the tenth story of a downtown office building. He had given orders to his secretary that he be not disturbed until he rang, after which he had locked his door and taken this comfortable position, allowing himself the luxury of lifting his well-shod heels to resting places on the desk pad. He closed his eyes as though in meditation, and if one could have read his thoughts, they must have run something like this:

"Well, here I am. Hale and hearty at sixty-five and with never a care in the world. I have just finished selling that bit of land at the edge of the Everglades, and a nice fat roll of profit it netted me, too. Jacob Rheinhard, my secretary, tells me that there have been many letters of complaint from those who purchased, and that most of them say they have been cheated, that their land is under several feet of water, useless, valueless. I have an idea that Jacob rather sympathizes with the buyers, too. But Jacob always was a little soft-hearted. I tell him he can't have a heart if he is to succeed in business. If I don't trim the suckers someone else would! Everything I have done has been inside the law, and if the people who bought did not have sense enough to take a look at their property before buying, is that my fault? Where should I be now if I had mixed sentiment with business? The other fellows would have garnered the wealth and I should have passed my last years as a charge upon distant relatives or as an inmate of a poorhouse! As it is, now I can retire tomorrow if

I wish, and pass the remainder of my life in comfort, waited upon by servants who must obey my slightest wish or lose their comfortable berths. What if a few people have lost money through me? If they had the spunk that God allowed geese they could begin again and earn more. Let me see, now, my balance in the First National Bank is——"

But here Crabtree's pleasant thoughts were rudely interrupted by a knocking at the door. The knocking was imperative, almost menacing. From long experience with disgruntled investors, Adam had learned to classify knocks on his office door to a nicety. He always knew, even before he opened, with about what sort of person and upon what kind of subject he was to be interviewed. He swung his heels to the floor and arose to open, knowing full well that Rheinhard had disobeyed his orders as a last resort, and because of a matter of vast importance.

"Well, Rheinhard," he said testily, "why have you disobeyed me? If it is not of sufficient importance to warrant this intrusion you can prepare at once to seek other employment."

"It is a woman, Adam," answered Rheinhard, with the familiarity of long association. He had many times before this been threatened with the loss of his job. He continued: "And she comes to protest against what she calls your fraudulent land sales along the Everglades. She is, or represents, one of the heaviest investors, and I deemed the matter important enough to warrant your personal attention."

"What! You dared disobey me for such a silly purpose? One would think that an investor had never before come to me with complaints! Tell the woman that I have wound up all my interests in the Everglades tract and that the matter is closed. I do not wish to see her. And as for you, you cease from this moment to be my secretary. Get out of my sight!"

"It ain't his fault, you old reprobate!"

Old Adam gave back a step at the apparition which slid under the arm of the secretary and raised up to stand before him. An old woman, bent of body and wrinkled with age, her gnarled and palsied hand grasping the head of an aged cane. The crown of an old straw hat partly covered her dirty gray locks; but a few wisps escaped imprisonment and these hung down raggedly before her face, while through this ugly and uneven screen her wise old eyes sparkled like coals of fire. Adam was minded of pictures he had seen which depicted the early days of Salem. It was almost as though she had stepped bodily out of a picture labeled "The Scold."

Adam was taken aback for a moment.

"Who are you? What do you wish?"

"You want to know who I be, do ye? And what I want? I'll tell ye, old skinflint, never doubt that!"

Adam, giving back before her flashing eyes, finally sank down in his chair behind the desk, while the old woman took her stance before him. Her jaws moved rapidly while she studied him, as though she chewed her words vigorously before she permitted them to come out. Rheinhard had closed the door and returned to his desk in the outer office, already forgetting that he had been discharged. Ever and anon he smiled as words and vagrant phrases, loudly uttered, came out to him. Smiled anew when he realized that it was usually the voice of the woman that he heard.

INSIDE, Adam met the gaze of the woman because her eyes commanded him and he could not turn away. She looked at him for fully

three minutes, her jaws working vigorously. Then she began to speak.

"You rich city fellers, with yer thievin' ways! Here Lard, my old man, and me, worked on a rocky farm nigh forty years, with always the dream in our hearts that we might some day get enough money together to buy us a little apple orchard that would keep us the rest of our days. We saw that booklet of yourn and it read like a fairy story. It was our dream come true. An apple orchard on easy terms, terms which, if we sold our farm, we could easy meet. We bought on the strength of that little book, only to find, when we had got there on the train, that our apple orchard was nothing but a splotch of swamp mud! You cheated us! Stole us blind! Why? So that you could fill your money-bags with gold! We wrote ye, wantin' our money back—and ye never answered! Knew all the time, ye did, that there weren't no apples and no orchard—nor any chance to start one! Crooked as a snake! A heart of stone! And the good God lets ye live!"

Here the old woman's voice rose to a shriek. Her hand trembled visibly as she elevated her cane and pointed it at Adam Crabtree.

"But ye don't have any truck with God, the likes of men like you! Ye can't believe in Him or ye wouldn't grind the poor into the dirt as though ye didn't see them in your path! Here ye are an old man—as old as I be—and I warrant you haven't even thought of preparing to meet your Maker! Grasping, gouging, cheating—filling the money-bags that ye can't take with ye when ye go! What do ye believe in, anyway? Not the Man Who died on the Cross, for He taught that men must become as little children. What becomes of such souls as yourn when the grave-digger has planted ye? Down in that shriveled and calloused soul of yourn you know that this life ain't all and that somewhere ye'll answer for the dirt ye've done on this side! What do ye believe? Answer me! Don't sit there and bug out your eyes like a fish that has been gaffed!"

To tell the truth Adam had thought little upon the end of life. He had almost reached the length of his allotted span, but had refused to worry about the matter. True, he had asked a preacher or two about the hereafter, and had learned that deathbed confessions were sufficient to secure forgiveness of sins. Why worry, then, when one might say that one's future was assured? He had listened to other harangues much like this one. They were old stories to him. Interesting, adding to his knowledge of human beings. It pleased Adam, since he had now quite recovered from his momentary discomfiture, to poke a little fun at the aged crone.

"My dear madam," he said politely, "of course I believe in a hereafter, a hereafter in which the sinner is punished for his sins. I believe that, after death, a man advances or retreats in the orbit of the soul just as he has advanced or gone back in that orbit here. In other words, I believe in the transmigration of souls!"

Adam Crabtree sat back with a satisfied smile on his face, happy in having brought forth a word that the ignorant old woman had perhaps never heard. In no whit abashed, however, the old woman chewed away vigorously for a moment before she replied.

"Ye do, eh?" she replied at length. "Then let me tell you what I hope will happen to you. Do ye know why I am here alone? Why the rest of the folks you cheated on Everglade swamp land ain't with me? It's because the train that we came on was in a collision and that nary a one of 'em got out alive except me—and I wouldn't got out either if I hadn't been in the back of the train arguin' with the conductor! All dead, every

one of 'em that came to make a kick to ye! And here is what I hope will happen. I hope that the souls of these folks who died in that collision will go into a pack of timber wolves, and that the pack will roam in the valley of souls without food until your time has come to die. Then I hope that your soul, little and shriveled as it is, will go into a mangy yellow cur, and that when it gets to the valley of souls it will be set upon by the pack, and that the pack will chase you from now to eternity, so that you will be running forever, with your tail between your legs!"

Words that scorched, words that showed the old woman to be far less ignorant than Adam Crabtree had thought her. He shrank back before the fury he read in her eyes. He seemed to grow smaller. She seemed to increase in size.

"My God, old woman!" he said at last; "tell me your name and I'll pay you every cent that you lost!"

"My name is Mara Simons, and I would starve before I would touch a penny that has known the grasp of your hand!"

The old woman turned then and walked out, closing the door behind her. It was almost as though she had never been there. Adam felt suddenly very old. He tottered slightly as he walked to the door through which the old woman had vanished.

"Rheinhard!" he called. "Jacob! Come here, man!"

The secretary arose swiftly and hurried to the side of his employer.

"Rheinhard," said Adam, "do you really believe that rot about a man paying for his sins after he has died?"

"Surely, Adam. A man pays or is paid, according to whether he has given or received. He is blessed or punished—certainly, surely."

"Then there may be something in what that old woman said. I almost feel that her wishes might come true. She looked as though she believed that they would."

"What old woman do you mean, Adam? You are rambling in your talk, aren't you?"

"No, I am not rambling, fool! And I mean the old woman you let into my office a few minutes ago and who just this minute passed you going out."

"I admitted no woman to your office, Adam! And no woman came out this way!"

"What! You mean to tell me I have been dreaming?"

"You easily could have been. You've been alone in that office for the last hour!"

Adam Crabtree staggered heavily and thrust out his hand to clutch for support at the shoulder of his secretary. He stared at the younger man, feeling in his heart that Rheinhard spoke the truth. But he clung to a hope, prayed for proof.

"Tell me, Rheinhard," he begged piteously, "has there been a train wreck today?"

"Yes, Adam, I was just reading about it when you came out of your office. A lot of people were killed."

"Any—any, women, Rheinhard?"

"One, yes."

"What was her name, man?"

"Mara Simons!"

Adam staggered again and would have fallen, had not Rheinhard supported him with an arm about his shoulders.

"What is it, Adam? Are you ill?"

"No, Rheinhard, not ill—but old, old—old and broken. 'Phone my valet and tell him to prepare a suitcase or two for my use. I am going to my little house in the woods, where I can rest and forget about work."

After the old man had groped his way to the door and out, Rheinhard smiled, a bit sheepishly, to himself.

"Rather rough on the old man, but good for his soul," he mused. "And

it was rather fortunate for me that he did not ask to see the list of the dead. Let him think he saw a ghost! It may soften his heart!''

Rheinhard sat down after the old man's departure and pondered gravely. Perhaps he had been a bit rough on the old man. After all, Adam was getting old and there might possibly lodge in his mind the idea that he had seen and conversed with a ghost in his office this afternoon. If a man of his age got such an idea, there was no telling what effect it might have upon his mind and upon his physical well-being. People who are tottering down life's hillside toward the last sunset often harbor strange fancies.

Rheinhard decided that it might perhaps be better to allow the old man time to reach his home and then to telephone him and tell him the exact truth. But he could stop in at some pay station on the way to his own home and take care of the matter. There was plenty of time. Adam's train did not leave until after nightfall.

But Rheinhard forgot.

2

There must have been something really human in old Adam's soul, for when he was alone in his little out-of-the-way hut at the edge of Willow Lake—a three-mile walk from the end of the stage line—he was happy. He didn't mind being alone. It made things seem so much more cozy. In the early morning he could go out and cut wood enough for the hours of evening, cook himself a decent breakfast, and then while away a few hours with rod and 'ine beneath some shady tree bordering Willow Lake. True, the fish were not so plentiful, and they didn't bite well, but Adam enjoyed these quiet hours with the whole soul of him. If sleepiness came upon him when the sun was westering, he had but to throw a tarpaulin down on the grass and stretch himself comfortably at length. A nap that lasted, usually, a couple of hours. Then supper before a light was needed, the building of a fire in the broad stone fireplace, and not even a smirking servant to disturb his solitude. Adam loved it. Or always had, up until this moment.

He had felt as though a weight had dropped from his shoulders when he had walked up the leaf-blanketed path which led to his sylvan retreat. He had slept his first night through without dreaming a single dream, and had wakened in the morning with the appetite of a far younger man. Here was the place to come to forget one's troubles, such as old women who talked on soul-transmigration, and heaped fateful curses upon one's soul.

Confound it! Why must the thought of the old woman come back to him at this time? Odd coincidence, too, that he should have dreamed the true name of a woman who had been killed in that collision. But it was just coincidence, nothing more. Outside of lurid fiction such things never really happened.

Adam had spent the first day along the shore of Willow Lake and had gone for a short tramp through dim trails in the woods. He was ready for his supper when he returned to his little hut.

When he first came in sight of his house he stopped suddenly, as though a hand and arm had been thrust forth from the trees which bordered the trail to bar his way. He stared fixedly at the figure which stood before his doorway. Adam knew the woods and its denizens. And he recognized the creature which now looked up at him as a timber wolf!

The animal seemed not at all frightened, but sank to its haunches and awaited his coming, its tongue lolling out redly as though it laughed.

Adam laughed shakily. Then he lifted a rock and hurled it at the ani-

mal. The creature, its tongue still lolling out, dodged the falling stone and trotted sedately away to a safe distance, where it squatted once more and watched the diffident approach of Adam Crabtree.

Adam cursed roundly as he stepped inside the door, stumbling blindly over the sill because his eyes were fixed upon that gaunt animal which was watching him. He shook his fist at the creature.

"Curse you, you fiend!" he shouted; "I'll make you laugh on the other side of your face in a few seconds!"

He strode to a little closet in one side of his hut, where he kept his weapons, well oiled from his last visit, and seized upon a graceful shotgun.

"With some of these slugs in his hide, that dratted animal will think twice before he comes back to this hut to prowl around!"

Adam pumped a cartridge into the chamber and strode to the door. But the wolf had not waited. Far off in the woods, sounding eery in the gathering twilight, he heard the baying of a hound—or maybe it was a wolf. Adam Crabtree had never been able to tell the difference.

Somehow Adam's heart was heavy as he closed the door and barred it securely. Hurriedly he threw wood into the fireplace, anxious for a fire to dispel the shadows which crept in with the falling of dusk. Adam shivered slightly as he drew his chair up before the blaze. He had forgotten his supper, his appetite departed with the thoughts aroused by the sight of that gaunt gray timber wolf.

Tongues of flame leaped merrily aloft, the fire roaring as it licked hungrily at the pitchy wood.

Cursing inwardly at his own eery feeling of disquiet, Adam looked furtively about him and crouched lower in his easy chair. The shadows seemed heavier in the room than had always been their wont. He cursed again as he arose from his place and walked to examine the fastening of the door. The door was locked, all right, no doubt on that score.

From his suitcase Adam took a book and settled himself to while away the hours of early evening, determining to forget the creature which had been awaiting him before the door of his house.

He raised his head suddenly as a soft pattering began upon the roof. Rain was beginning to fall, while a distant roaring, off there in the woods, told him that a heavier rain was rushing toward him through the dusk. These few scattering drops had but been the vanguard of a host.

He looked at the windows, against the outside of which he could see the little rivulets caused by the drip from the roof. He studied their snaky traces and shivered again. Odd what queer figures the rain could write upon the window-panes!

Adam muttered testily to himself as he arose a second time, to try the fastening of the door again and to pull the blinds across the windows. Everything was snug now inside, nothing to mar the quiet comfort of the little house's interior.

Came a lull in the gentle tattoo of raindrops upon the roof. The lull before the storm that was to come.

Adam stiffened convulsively as, coincident with the lull, there came to him, out of the distant woods, the throaty baying of a hound—or a timber wolf! Far away, off to one side, he heard the answer to that cry, a baying that was pitched in a finer key, but that thrilled old Adam Crabtree to the marrow in his aged bones.

Then the storm broke upon the roof in all its fury. Adam sank down in sheer comfort and listened to the steady roar upon the roof, glad that the sound drowned out all other sounds that might have come to him out of the night.

A HALF-HOUR, an hour, went by. Then the storm swept on by, and Adam looked up from his book and listened for a moment to the steady drip of the water which dropped into puddles that had formed in the darkness beneath the eaves.

What was that?

A wild baying sound, many-tongued, ruthless, swift-flying. A sound that swept through the woods with the speed of the traveling storm itself. Adam knew that, somewhere out there in the darkness, the pack was on the prowl, swift-running through the forest lanes, noses against the ground, red tongues lolling out, as the kings of the woods followed the fresh spoor of prey through the dampness.

What had that old woman said?

"I hope that the souls of these folks who died in the collision will go into a pack of timber wolves, and that the pack will roam in the valley of souls without food until your time has come to die!"

What was that?

Adam Crabtree, his scalp crawling oddly, turned and looked over the back of his chair toward the door—beyond the stout panel of which he could hear a faint scratching sound, and a low, plaintive whine!

The whine passed around the corner of the house, and he could hear the scraping of a furry body against the corner as the unseen creature brushed against it. Then the scratching sound began once more—this time below the window.

Adam Crabtree was badly frightened now. In his mind's eye he could see again the old hag as she stood there in his office and hurled her weird curse into his teeth. Heard the grating of her snagged teeth as she fairly shouted: "I would starve before I would touch a single cent that had known the touch of your hand!"

Adam was glad, as he sat silently there, staring at the drawn blind, that he could not see out into the darkness—did not know the nature of the animal that whined outside his window, scratching queerly at the logs as though it sought for a way into the brightly lighted room. Glad that he could not see out.

Then, with a report like the sudden firing of a pistol, the catch on the window-blind gave way and the blind whirled up and around its roller. Adam, his heart in his mouth, stared at the blind. Slowly, entirely against his will, his eyes traveled down the damp window-pane to rest in the fixity of horror upon the gaunt face which stared in at him—the droll face of a huge dog, or wolf, the tongue lolling out redly, the eyes glistening pink in the reflection from the fire in the grate.

Adam knew that the animal stood on its hind legs, with its forepaws upon the window-sill. In his heart he knew that those paws were the paws of an animal; but his eyes caught a weird picture as of little, human hands, tightly clenched as they supported the weight of a body!

Then the animal's mouth closed suddenly, and the jaws of the creature began to work swiftly, as though the animal chewed upon some morsel that Adam could not see.

Adam was reminded, not at all pleasantly, of the old hag, who, in his office, had worked her jaws like that, as though she chewed her words before she would let them come out.

Adam's guilty imagination was working overtime now, for upon the animal's head he fancied he could see the ragged crown of an old straw hat, and that two sharp ears were thrust upward from it, through holes on either side.

With a yell of mortal fear, hardly realizing what he did, Adam rushed once more to the little closet where he kept his shotgun and his rifles. Once more he came out with the shotgun. But the face at the window had vanished.

Fear driving him to action, Adam Crabtree sprang to the door and unbarred it, first seizing a burning brand from the fireplace. Outside he rushed, into the muddy ooze before the door—outside and around the corner to stand below the window.

Nothing there. Except footprints which led away, a zigzag path, toward the forest. Trembling in every fiber, Adam lifted the burning brand high above his head. He twisted his body this way and that as his eyes peered here and there, striving to pierce the darkness.

Glistening like dying coals, sparkling two by two at the edge of the woods, he saw moving dots that he knew were eyes. They flashed on and then off, while Adam's reason knew that the creatures which watched him there looked first toward him and then away. To right and left he saw those eyes, two here, two there, always two set close together, twin balls of twinkling light. Then came again the gentle whining which he had first heard outside his door.

Casting reason to the winds, Adam Crabtree dropped the burning brand to the ground and swung the shotgun to his shoulder. The night was split with spurts of fire, the silence was broken by savage reports, as Adam, working the lever swiftly, opened fire upon that circle of twin-ball flames.

He heard a sudden yelp ahead there, and the scurrying of feet through the leaves. Black shadows, darker even than the shadows at the edge of the woods, flashed away to right and left, as the creatures of the night fled away to safety.

Grunting with satisfaction at his accomplishment—accomplishment which told him that the visitors were, after all, things of flesh and blood—Adam Crabtree bent to retrieve the brand which still flickered below him on the damp ground.

His hand was at the haft of the torch when he suddenly stiffened, frozen to immobility even as he crouched.

For the torch had fallen athwart that line of footprints beneath the window, and Adam was noting for the first time the real shape of those prints.

To his stunned sensibilities it looked to Adam as though those prints had in reality been made by the impress of tiny human fingers! As though a little child, alone in the woods, had crawled away on hands and knees, leaving the marks of its little hands in the mud beneath the window-sill.

Adam regained a semblance of reason when he found himself once more inside his house, with the door rebarred, and doubly secured with the back of a chair beneath the knob.

He was never able to tell how he managed to pass the night and retain his reason. But when morning came his courage came with it, and Adam, who had feared nothing on earth or below it, swore to himself that he would not be driven to abandoning his hard-earned vacation, even though all the wolves in the forest howled through the nights outside his window.

But he sat him down and wrote a letter to Jacob Rheinhard, telling his employee to come at once to the house in the woods to keep him company. Painstakingly, repeating the bare facts as he had seen them, Adam told in that letter of the face at the window—the face that had reminded him so strongly of Mara Simons, who Rheinhard had told him was dead. Desirous of setting down all the details, Adam also stated in his letter the exact time when the blind had shot up, and the face had looked in.

"It was exactly at 9 o'clock, Jacob," Adam had ended the letter.

Adam sealed it then and walked the three miles to the end of the stage

line, where he paid a messenger a large sum to carry the letter to Rheinhard, knowing that if the messenger proved faithful Rheinhard would be with him in that house before dusk came down again.

Rheinhard was reading the newspaper when the messenger presented the missive. He tore open the envelope and read the letter through. Then he whistled softly to himself, and his eyes went back to the paper before him. With a blunt forefinger he turned the leaves of the paper until he found the news story that he sought. He read over again that portion of the story which had brought the weird idea to his mind:

"——and the motorman said that, just as the swift street-car came around the curve, rushing cityward, he saw the body of a woman stretched across the track. He was traveling too swiftly to stop the car before he struck her; but he halted as swiftly as he could. He was too late. The woman had been crushed beyond human semblance, mangled horribly, and her body lifted and hurled into the rear trucks of the car, where it was caught and wrapped, a bloody horror, about and about the trucks. It was impossible to find a single feature by which the woman might have been identified, and at this writing the bloody body had not yet been removed from beneath the car. The motorman said that, aided by the horror-stricken passengers, he had searched the track on either side for any articles that might later serve to identify the victim of this terrible tragedy. All he found was an aged cane, fashioned from a piece of ironwood, knobbed at the end and worn heavily from constant use, and the crown of an old straw hat, which may or may not have been worn by the victim. The motorman believes that the woman was a suicide. He set the hour of the tragedy at 9 p. m."

Rheinhard whistled again softly, as he threw needed articles into his handbag.

He moved slowly, for he dreaded to go to that little house in the woods. What would he find there, and how could he tell old Adam Crabtree of this new and startling development?

3

The upper disk of the sun was just disappearing over the western horizon when Jacob Rheinhard walked up to the door of Adam Crabtree's sylvan retreat. Not a sound came from the house, and an uncomfortable misgiving settled upon Rheinhard. He dreaded to open that door, dreaded to see what he might reasonably expect to see beyond it.

He finally mustered up the courage to rap lightly upon the panel with the end of a staff which he had found in the trail from the end of the stage line. The answer to his rap was startling, to say the least.

A sudden roar and the tearing of lead through wooden panels, and Rheinhard knew that the man inside had been sitting just beyond that door with a death-dealing gun in his hand. Had it not been for that staff, and the fact that Rheinhard had stood a bit to one side to rap, he must of necessity have been riddled with the heavy slugs which tore through the door almost in his face. His hand trembled as he carefully brushed dust splinters from the nap of his coat.

"It's Jacob, Adam," he called at last. "Open up and let me in."

The scraping of a chair inside, the heavy dragging of leaden feet approaching the door. Then the door swung open a crack and the face of Adam Crabtree looked out.

Rheinhard was stunned at the old man's appearance. Adam was really old, all of sixty-five, as Rheinhard well knew. But the face that looked out at Rheinhard, wrinkled, worn, pitifully haggard, was that of a decrepit octogenarian. Rheinhard scarcely recognized his employer. The old man had aged fifteen years in a single night. His paunch, too, seemed to have shrunken, until his clothes hung on him in untidy folds.

"Is it really you, Jacob?" said the old man querulously. "I didn't know but that it might be Mara

Simons, coming back to make me another visit!"

And old Adam Crabtree cackled shrilly, a sound that caused the cold chills to course swiftly up and down the spine of Rheinhard. Senile laughter. Laughter of an old and wicked man who dotes upon his own wickedness. Doubtful laughter. Reasonless laughter.

"You didn't see her on your walk through the woods, did you, Rheinhard?"

"No, I didn't, Adam. How could I see her? She's dead."

Rheinhard crossed the door-sill as he spoke, and the old man slammed the door viciously after him, bolting it at once. Adam made answer.

"Dead? Sure, I know she's dead! It was her soul which came to see me last night! Her soul which had gone into a timber wolf, just as she promised me! She ran with her pack last night. I sat up until daylight, listening to their yelps in the forest."

"Tut, tut, Adam! The wolves ran free in the forest long before those people were killed in the collision. Human souls do not go into the bodies of beasts. And besides, Mara Simons was killed only last night."

"At what hour, Jacob?"

"Nine o'clock."

"And it was at 9 o'clock when the face of the wolf that looked like Mara Simons peered in at my window. Don't tell me that spirits do not go into the bodies of animals. What about the evil spirits that went into the herd of swine, after Christ had cast them out of the man possessed of devils? Ha, ha, Jacob! Don't tell me anything about it, man! I tell you I *know!* I am old, and the old can see things that are denied to the vision of younger folk."

Rheinhard talked soothingly to Adam Crabtree, attempting to divert his mind by talking of the day's business at the town office. Adam listened, apparently much interested; but when his gaze swerved away from the eyes of Rheinhard, to come to rest on the blind which obscured the window-pane, Rheinhard shuddered.

What was that?

The long-drawn-out baying of a distant hound, ending in that wail which old folks tell us means the presence or near approach of death. Old Adam Crabtree listened carefully, and when the sound died away he broke into that uncomfortable, hair-ruffling, senile laughter. He arose from his chair and walked to the closet. Before Rheinhard could divine Adam's intention, the old man had returned to his seat before the fireplace, with the shotgun held in readiness across his knees. Rheinhard arose abruptly and approached Adam.

"Here, Adam," he said soothingly, "let me have that gun. There is nothing that will bother you while I am here to help you."

"Stand back, there, young man! I know what you want! You want to take this gun away from me so that Mara Simons can put her paws—her baby paws!—upon me when I am unprepared! Get back, I tell you, or I will shoot!"

The eyes that met those of Rheinhard unflinchingly were not those of a man entirely sane.

"All right, Adam," replied Rheinhard, sinking back into his chair; "no harm done if you keep the gun. But why should you stay here where animals can come to the door after night? Let's go back to town tomorrow."

"Go back to the town office?" cried Adam Crabtree. "Back to the office where Mara Simons can get in and where you can't stop her? Never! I'll stay here, for she can't get through the blinds. She tried that last night. Tried it and I drove her away."

"But Mara Simons wasn't dead when she came into your office, Adam.

It was only a little joke of mine to let you think she was!"

Adam wagged his head wisely.

"You can't fool me, Jacob," he said, "for I know she was dead. She died in a train wreck—and her soul went into a timber wolf."

Rheinhard saw that it was useless to argue with Adam. He therefore arose from his chair and built a fire in the fireplace, after which he set about preparing a light meal. These homely duties seemed, as Adam watched Rheinhard, to bring the old man's mind back to a semblance of normality. For before Rheinhard had placed the food on the rough table in the room, Adam was talking enthusiastically upon a new project which he had planned before the advent of Mara Simons. He talked with all his native shrewdness, emphasizing certain abstruse points with the stabbing end of his forefinger. But he wound up his talk with a statement that chilled Rheinhard anew.

"And we'll cut all the timber off that new tract of land before we offer it for sale, Jacob. For if we do it there'll be no place for the wolves to run, and we won't be bothered with their howling!"

After the meal the two men sat down once more before the roaring fire and looked into the flames. There was little conversation between them. Rheinhard dreaded the night which was to come. The hours wore along toward midnight. Rheinhard was relieved when no further howls went belling forth through the night, relieved when no gaunt faces appeared at the window. He was inclined to think that the old man had imagined last night's weird visitation. He promised himself that he would bend every effort to get the old man to return to the city on the morrow.

Finally he yawned prodigiously and arose.

"Let's go to bed, Adam," he said. "You might as well turn in now, in the bed in that room." He pointed to a door leading into a tiny sleeping room. "I'll take a couple of quilts and spread them down on the floor in here before the fire. And go to sleep, Adam, for I shall be watching. Nothing can get in past me."

"No, no, Jacob. I will make my bed in here. Besides, I am as wide-awake as can be, and plan to sit up another hour or so."

And for no reason at all, Adam swerved suddenly until his gaze was once more upon the window-blind, the muzzle of the gun which he still held across his lap pointing steadily toward the very center of the blind.

With some misgivings, praying that morning would come swiftly, Rheinhard arose and sought the adjoining room, where he undressed swiftly, blew out the tiny kerosene lamp and dropped heavily into bed. He was tired from his unaccustomed walk, and fell asleep at once.

Hours later he awoke with the cold sweat breaking out all over his body, and sat rigidly erect among the covers.

An odd sound was coming from that other room. The whining of a dog that has been beaten, and that crawls on its belly to its master to be petted or beaten again. The crooning voice of old Adam Crabtree. The thumping sound such as a crouching dog makes when it beats its tail in happiness against the floor.

Dread in his heart, Rheinhard sprang from his bed and threw open the door. Adam was dozing in his chair, the shotgun clutched in his hands across his lap. Not another living thing in the room. Not a sound after Rheinhard opened that door—for a fleeting moment. Then that crooning sound from the moving lips of old Adam Crabtree, and the thumping, as of a dog's tail, against the floor!

Yet there was no dog in the room that Rheinhard could see. Frightened in spite of himself, unable to reason because of that fright, Rheinhard had not noted that the sound was caused by the gentle tapping of the sole of Adam's shoe against the wooden floor. Yet even had he noticed, what must he have thought? For he had heard the curse that Mara Simons had hurled into the teeth of the man who had swindled her.

Rheinhard returned to his room and to bed, pulling the covers up about his face, his eyes staring straight up at the ceiling until the gray shadows which come before the dawn had begun to trace their pictures on the walls of the room.

It was the Adam Crabtree of old who met Rheinhard at the breakfast table that morning. The businesslike Adam who discussed his great plans whenever opportunity offered.

"I'm over my scare now, Jacob," he said at length, "and there is really no need to return to town. We both of us need a rest, and we can take it here. I won't lose my nerve again. We'll eat now, and then spend a few hours along the lake with rod and line."

It was the old Adam speaking, the Adam that Rheinhard had for years been accustomed to obeying. Rheinhard dreaded another night in that house, but with Adam Crabtree normal again there would not be such a strain on his nerves. Things always look brighter when the sun is shining.

The two cleared away the breakfast dishes, and Adam talked volubly as they sorted over the fishing tackle. Continued to talk as they walked side by side toward Willow Lake. There were roses now in the cheeks of Adam Crabtree. Artificial roses, if Rheinhard had only known: roses that meant fever instead of health. But Rheinhard was not a doctor.

Rheinhard sat down under a tree to go over his line before casting, while Adam walked forward and stood on the shore of the lake, drinking in the fresh morning air with deep intakes of breath. Then he gave a yell of mortal terror.

Rheinhard was at his side in an instant, and Adam seized him savagely by the arm.

"Look there, Jacob!" he shouted quaveringly; "see that reflection in the water! I just turned my head down to look at my reflection and there it was. At first it was just my own face that looked back at me; but as I looked at it the face changed, took on new form, and I was staring, not at my own reflection, but the form of a mangy yellow cur, which hung its head as it looked at me! Then it turned away with its tail between its legs! Can't you see it, Jacob? It's running now, straight down the sloping bank of the lake, through the mud toward the bottom! See, it has almost gone out of sight beneath the water!"

Rheinhard, chilled in spite of the warmth of the rising sun, looked down into the water in the direction indicated by Adam. All he saw in the water, however, was the cloud of silt and mud stirred up by a startled fish which had been disturbed from its sleep in the mud at sight of Adam Crabtree.

"It was only a startled fish, Adam," said Rheinhard soothingly.

"Fish nothing, fool! Don't you suppose I know the difference between a fish and a yellow dog?"

It was a long time before Rheinhard was able to quiet the excited old man. But he accomplished it, finally, and Adam sat down with him to while away the hours with rod and line. Once or twice as the day wore on, Rheinhard broached the subject of return to town, but old Adam vetoed the proposition so savagely

that Rheinhard at last refrained. His heart was heavy with foreboding.

Then it was too late to return before the following day. For the time of departure of the last stage had come and gone.

A walk through the woods took up two or three more hours of the day. The two returned to the house in the early hours of lowering twilight.

Evening wore on until it came time for the two to spend another night in the house which, to Rheinhard, had become a house of eery dread.

As he had done the night before, Rheinhard awoke long after he had fallen asleep, to hear that plaintive whining from the other room, and the thumping of a tail against the wooden floor.

"Are you awake, Adam?" called Rheinhard, this time afraid to go to the door and open.

He was answered by a snarl of rage such as a cur dog emits when it disputes possession of a gnawing bone with another cur dog. The snarling ceased for a dreadful moment, during which Rheinhard trembled as though with the ague. Then he heard that thumping sound once more.

His heart in his mouth, Rheinhard arose and lighted his lamp, swearing to himself when he noted the trembling of his own fingers. The swearing, the hearing of his own voice, brought back some of his courage.

He opened the door and entered the room where he had left old Adam Crabtree—to halt in terror at what he saw.

Old Adam Crabtree, sprawled on the floor, doubled up grotesquely with his back to the fire as though for warmth, was kicking gently, the soft leather in the shoes which he wore giving forth a sound much like the pounding of a dog's tail against the floor. Rheinhard rushed forward and looked down at his employer. And knew that the old man was dying.

"Can you speak, Adam?" cried Rheinhard. "Tell me what happened to you!"

Adam's answer was to open his eyes, which were swiftly glazing with the approaching of the Grim Reaper, and to snarl savagely at Rheinhard, just as a cur dog snarls when the bone which it gnaws is threatened.

Rheinhard thrust forth his hand to place it upon the temple of his employer. Adam snapped at the hand and Rheinhard drew it back as though a dog had actually offered to bite him. His eyes opened wide when he noted that Adam's lips had drawn back with that savage snarl.

Adam died with that snarl on his lips, and Rheinhard shuddered as he noted the set of the dead lips, below which protruded the two upper side teeth, looking strangely like the fangs of a hound.

Rheinhard came back to reason when his breath gave out and he discovered that he was all of a mile away from the house, running with all his speed toward the end of the stage line. He was thankful that he had waited to don the greater part of his clothing, although he could not remember having done this.

Safely away, alone in the woods after midnight, Rheinhard came to a halt and looked back at the house of terror from which he had fled. The house was in flames.

What matter? Adam Crabtree was dead before the flames had started. Rheinhard was really glad that the house was soon to be wiped out. There would be no temptation to return to investigate.

Rheinhard suddenly froze to graven immobility as, showing up plainly against the bright light of the burning house, he saw a score or more of flitting shadows break forth from the woods beyond, flash swiftly past the flame, and run swiftly, directly to-

ward him. Long before the pack reached him Rheinhard knew that the shadows were those of ranging timber wolves. Would they attack him?

Rheinhard did not know. But to be on the side of safety he drew aside and pressed his body against the boll of a tree beside the trail. As the pack flashed past him, giving tongue now as though it pursued some sort of prey, Rheinhard staggered suddenly and threw his arms around the tree trunk to keep from falling.

For just ahead of the pack, its tongue hanging out, staggering from side to side as though it had run far, Rheinhard saw another shadow which fled away before the wolves. This shadow was smaller, and Rheinhard did not require that the animal pass through a shaft of eery light where the moonbeams pierced the foliage of the trees to know what manner of creature it was which fled for its very life.

It was a mangy yellow cur, with its tail between its legs!

Ever and anon, while still close enough for Rheinhard to hear, it gave tongue to yelps of mortal terror—yelps that were much like those which Rheinhard had heard two nights in succession in that room in the now burning house where old Adam Crabtree was being cremated.

It was a wan figure which sat on the log bench at the end of the stage line next morning. At least the barefooted yokel of the forests must have thought so, for as he walked along the road he paused to speak a moment with Jacob Rheinhard.

But Rheinhard did not listen to the fellow. His eyes were fixed in fascination on the gaunt gray animal which the fellow held to heel at the end of a leash—a timber wolf with lolling red tongue, his pointed ears showing jauntily through two holes in the crown of an old straw hat which rested upon the creature's head. The yokel noted Jacob's glance.

"He won't hurt ye, mister," the yokel said; "he's a pet. We raised him from a wee puppy that pap caught in the woods. I've taught him a heap of tricks, too. He wears that old hat all the time, an he's tarnation proud of it. But he got away from us twice. The first time he came back; I do believe because he went away without that hat of hisn. I put it on him and he ran away again. For two nights he's been running with the wolves in the woods. Last night our yaller hound ran away, to look for Wolf here, I guess; but the pack chased him home again, and Wolf follered the houn' back. And now the tarnation houn' has run away again! He's been actin' tarnal queer for the last two days! I'm taking' Wolf out now to see if we can track the houn', cuz he's a darn good dog around pigs!"

Rheinhard's eyes fell to the front pads of the huge wolf. His eyes must have grown very round, for the yokel noticed again and spoke.

"Yuh see, mister," he said, "this tarnation critter never wanted to stay out of the house nights, so pap cut his toenails off so that he wouldn't wake us up scratchin' at the door! Makes his feet look funny, don't it? Pap says it makes 'em look almost like baby's hands! Well, so long, mister, I've gotta get on the trail of that dog!"

But as long as Rheinhard lived, he was never entirely satisfied at the manner in which the affair had been brought to a close.

The MALIGNANT PEARL

by

Thomas H. Griffiths

"Before he had a chance to use the weapon again, Luner's baton cracked on his head."

VERY few people know that the Countess of Clamnel, the English society beauty, once had a startling experience which almost caused her death. At the time, the society and general newspapers merely chronicled the fact of her illness, they never got the inside history of her mysterious malady.

By a peculiar coincidence, two men whom I know, met in the Cosmopolitan Club, Hamilton, Bermuda. And each had the fragment of a story, which pieced together, gave a clue to the weird experience that nearly caused the death of the beautiful countess.

Randolph Vince, a smart, clean-cut American in the early thirties, knew one-half the uncanny story. Harry Bruce, assistant chief in the Bermuda police force, knew the other part of it.

That Ranny Vince should be familiar with the phenomenon that happened to the countess did not in the least surprize me. His business (he was attached to one of the departments at Washington, D. C.) took him to many strange places in this world. And Ranny could, whenever he cared to, tell some remarkable true tales, which he invariably described as "little incidents in my career." One of the "little incidents" was revealed in the story of the malignant pearl.

It was Bruce who started the conversation about gems, and pearls in particular. As we sat in the smoking room at the club, chatting, he produced a Bermuda pearl which he gave to Ranny for inspection. Vince examined the gem, then he remarked: "That is a peculiar feature of the Bermuda pearl, they all have a yellowish tinge, though I did see one once that was black. It must have been a freak. And I never want to see another one like it."

"I, too," said Bruce, "know of one black Bermuda pearl. In fact, I had the pleasure of handling it before Sir

Henry Klane, who was once a governor here, bought it and took it to England. But, between ourselves, Vince, I wouldn't have accepted the pearl as a gift. There was *obeah* on it."

"*Obeah?*" I interrupted. "What's *obeah?*"

"West Indian witchcraft," Bruce told me.

"What shape was the pearl?" asked Ranny.

"Irregular, pear-shaped," replied Bruce.

"The same gem," said Vince. "I am positive, the same black pearl that nearly killed the Countess of Clamnel. I recollect being told she had got it from someone who had brought it from Bermuda. And there was an evil spell on the gem, eh?"

"Yes," said Bruce, "and West Indian witchcraft is bad stuff. No white man can understand it."

"I believe you," said Ranny. "I saw what the pearl did to the Countess of Clamnel, and it was decidedly uncanny. Indeed, in all my travels I never saw anything to equal it for weirdness. I'll tell you what happened."

For obvious reasons, the names mentioned in this narrative are fictitious. But the other facts are as written in this chronicle.

RANDOLPH VINCE'S STORY

In the fall of last year [Vince commenced] I was sent to England on special business. Just before I left New York, I wrote to the Duke of Warne, telling him when I was due to arrive in England.

The duke and I had met in Washington, and we had become quite intimate. He had made me promise that whenever I visited England, I would stay with him at his country residence.

Ultimately I reached my destination, and at the Revelle Hotel, London, where I usually stayed, I found a letter awaiting me from the duke. In a very cordial manner he renewed his invitation. I decided to accept his offer as soon as I had finished my business. A few days later I was comfortably settled at Langton Hall as one of the Duke of Warne's many guests.

The day after I arrived was the commencement of the Worcester County social season. Arrangements had been made to hold the annual ball of the County Hunt Club in the ballroom at Langton Hall. As a guest of the Duke of Warne, and as a matter of courtesy, I was invited to attend the premier social event of the season.

The function was a remarkably brilliant one. Distinguished men in naval and military uniforms, beautiful women handsomely garbed, made an assemblage remarkable for its variety and brilliance. The jewels displayed by the elegant, graceful women sparkled and glittered, while the red and blue uniforms worn by the men, adorned as many of them were by medals and orders, created a magnificent scene as the color and glitter mingled in the ballroom.

I stood at one side of the room and admired the gay dancers as they circled past me. One pair were especially noteworthy, and my eyes followed their movements as they swirled around the room. Young Lord Danley, tall, handsome and dark, was waltzing with the beautiful Countess of Clamnel. And the exquisite loveliness of the consort of the Earl of Clamnel was distinctive, even in that gathering of beautiful women. Chatting and laughing, the handsome pair again passed by where I stood. It was then I noticed, as it seemed to me, a spot of blood on the white bosom of the countess. For a moment I was startled by the strange resemblance. Then I smiled, as I realized that the seeming spot of blood could

not be anything other than a dark-colored jewel attached as a pendant to her pearl necklace.

The Duchess of Warne approached me. Banteringly she said, "You American men are like the men of other nationalities!"

"Why, Your Grace?" I asked, surprized.

The duchess laughed, a charming laugh in which I detected roguishness. "You are fond of pretty women," said she, adding, "I saw you admiring Lucille. Do you dance with her this evening?"

"Yes, I anticipate the pleasure," I replied. Then I ventured a question. I knew the information I desired bordered on the personal, but I was so intimate with the duke and duchess that I was sure my inquisitiveness would not seem impertinent to Her Grace.

"Have you noticed the pendant gem on the necklace of the Countess of Clamnel, how similar it seems to a spot of blood, Your Grace?"

"No," she said, "I have not. But now you point it out, Mr. Vince, I must admit there is a marked similarity. The gem is a pear-shaped black pearl brought from Bermuda. Lucille added it to her necklace to effect a contrast. She has a penchant for *outré* color schemes."

"The bizarre contrast is most becoming to the countess," I commented. The duchess smiled, then after a moment or two of desultory conversation she left me. I glanced at my program. One more dance, then I would have the delightful pleasure of waltzing with the Countess of Clamnel.

The musicians were tuning their instruments as I approached the countess. Charmingly she greeted me, remarking with a smile, "I thought you had forgotten me, Mr. Vince."

"Impossible," I replied, as the orchestra commenced to play a delightfully dreamy Hungarian waltz tune. A moment, and we were in the midst of the entrancing dance steps. The countess danced with the lissomeness and gracefulness which supposition claims as a fairy gift. As we lightly glided around the ballroom, conversing on many topics, my eyes involuntarily glanced at the black pearl. The countess noticed my glance. "Are you admiring my Bermuda pearl, Mr. Vince?"

"Yes," I said, somewhat abashed at having been caught staring at the gem, an action which she might have construed as that of an ill-bred person. But I felt reassured when she said: "A beauty, isn't it? I am wearing it for the first time."

"It is a magnificent gem, Your Ladyship," I agreed. And for a while nothing more was said about the pearl.

The deliciousness of my lovely companion so enchanted me, that even the ordinary polite conversation seemed frivolous. In perfect accord we glided over the floor to the entrancing harmony of the languorous Hungarian music. The atmosphere, redolent with the perfume of violets, seemed sensuous, and my usually prosaic imagination became charged with a fancy absurdly foreign to my nature. I imagined my exquisite companion and I were dancing on the clouds toward an unknown paradise.

Suddenly the idealistic fancy was dispelled, as with dilated nostrils I realized that the aroma of the violets had been replaced by an acrid odor. Momentarily my sense of smell could not analyze the scent. Then I shuddered, as my perceptive faculty recognized the odor. It was that of burnt flesh.

While I was wondering, seeking for a cause of the strange smell, the countess startled me by her peculiar actions. I felt her hand, which was resting on my arm, grip me as if her

fingers had been twitched by a spasm of pain. Her footsteps faltered, then she tripped and nearly fell. In a moment, with my aid she recovered her balance. We stopped dancing, and as I supported her I became aware that there was something radically wrong with the Countess of Clamnel.

"Your pardon, Mr. Vince," she said in a tremulous voice. "Would you please escort me to the reception room. I feel strangely indisposed."

"Anything to assist Your Ladyship," I said, distressed by the expression of pain on her lovely face. Her features were drawn, and her eyes reflected anguish. Without doubt, the countess was enduring intense pain; and it was caused by more than mere fatigue.

We passed from the ballroom into the deserted reception room, where I assisted her to a lounge. "Shall I get water for Your Ladyship?" I asked, distressed at the sight of her pallid face.

"No," she said, faintly. "The necklace! Take off the necklace!"

Her fingers fumbled with the clasp at the back of her neck, but she seemed unable to release the fastening.

"Permit me," I said. As I was about to lean over to undo the clasp, I suddenly stopped, for a whiff of the pungent smell of burnt flesh again reached my nostrils. Then, what must have been a diabolical instinct directed my gaze at the black pearl. Mentally I am strong, but what I saw almost caused me to shout with horror. The pearl was no longer black. It had changed to a dull red color, and as I stared at it fascinated, it shimmered and glowed like a red-hot spark on the white bosom of the countess. In the grip of a spell, I stood and stared at the gem. No smoke was perceptible; there was no indication of anything burning, nor could I hear the sizzle of flesh in contact with the glowing pearl. The phenomenon was absolutely inexplicable to me.

An agonizing cry from Her Ladyship startled me into action.

"Take it off!" she cried. Quickly I unloosed the fastening, and then I began to draw the necklace from around her neck. It came easily enough, all except the black pearl pendant. The malignant gem stuck to her flesh. With a jerk, I wrenched it out of the hole where it had embedded itself on her bosom, and as I pulled away the pearl, she moaned, then fainted.

Stupidly, for my senses were dazed, I stared at the gem in my hand. Its appearance now was normal, the fire glow had completely vanished. There was nothing to show that it had been any other color than black. Yet on the white flesh of the countess I could see the vivid burn, black and misshapen like the pearl. Mystified, I seemed unable to do anything other than stand and stare at the horrible disfigurement.

A movement by the countess aroused me out of my contemplative mood; her body twitched convulsively, and again she moaned. Carrying the necklace in my hand I hurried out of the room to get assistance. Outside the door of the reception room, I fortunately found a footman, and I sent him to find the Duchess of Warne and the Earl of Clamnel, saying that the countess was seriously ill.

A few minutes later they entered the room, and with them came Sir Harley David, the eminent surgeon, who at the time was also a guest of the Duke of Warne. Rapidly I told them of the malignant action of the black pearl.

"Incredible, Mr. Vince!" exclaimed the duchess, horrified.

"It may sound so, Your Grace. But look at the burn. That is corroboration enough."

"Vince is right," said the surgeon

as he examined the hole in the flesh of the countess. "Lucille has somehow received a terrible burn."

Hours later, the Countess of Clamnel regained consciousness, but only for a few minutes. For days she lay delirious, constantly raving about the pearl that was burning its way to her heart. A month elapsed before Her Ladyship recovered from the shock.

Later, I heard she had gone for a cruise in the Mediterranean. And I also heard that the Earl of Clamnel had removed the malignant black pearl from the necklace, sewed it in a small bag with a weight, and then dropped it somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea. And that was the end of the virulent black Bermuda pearl.

THE KEY STORY OF HARRY BRUCE

A SUITABLE end [commented Bruce]. Yes, a very fitting end. From the sea it came, to the sea it returned. Its destructive propensity is finished. I am glad. I know, Vince, there was *obi* or *obeah* (whichever word you like, they both mean the same), on the black pearl. So I'm happy to know the devilish gem has been put where it can not harm another human being. But I'll tell you the evil history of the pearl and how I came in contact with it. Then you will understand how the Countess of Clamnel became an innocent victim of a malignant spell. She was very fortunate; some of the people who handled the pearl died—violent deaths.

A mulatto named Shansun found the pearl. Shansun was the servant of Ferguson, a white fisherman, and the two of them lived alone on Agar's Island. One of the mulatto's duties was the collecting of bait, and out of an oyster gathered for that purpose came the black pearl.

One day the mulatto brought a pail full of oysters into the house, and among the lot there was one with a peculiar humpbacked shell. He picked it out of the pail and gave it to Ferguson, pointing out the peculiarity in the shape of the shell. Ferguson opened it and found a splendid black pearl. Now among the colored people a superstition is rife that to find and possess a black pearl will bring them good luck and happiness. Naturally, when Shansun saw the pearl he demanded it from the white man. Ferguson obstinately refused to return it, for he recognized its cash —not sentimental—value. Abusive words led to blows, and utimately the white man and the mulatto fought for possession of the black pearl. Shansun was badly beaten, and with the beating he professed to renounce his claim to the gem.

The same afternoon, Ferguson and Shansun rowed in a skiff to Hamilton. The white man had the pearl, and he intended to sell it to Jan Van Dorp, an old Dutchman who dealt in pearls and native curios. Leaving the mulatto in charge of the boat, Ferguson went to the house of the dealer in gems. He was unaware that his order was disobeyed and that he was being stealthily followed. Shansun was trailing him.

As Ferguson entered the house of Van Dorp, the mulatto made his way, craftily and unseen, to the rear of the building. There he met Mammy Bean, an old West Indian negress cook, who with Mrs. Wain, a white housekeeper, comprized the menage of the Dutchman.

To Mammy Bean, Shansun told the story of the finding of the black pearl, not forgetting to mention that he thought Ferguson was about to dispose of the gem to her master. The news interested the old negress. She wasn't grieved at Shansun's loss —that was a matter of no interest— but her nimble brain instantly concerned itself in a plot to acquire the pearl. She had a reputation among the colored people as a sorceress, and the possession of a black pearl would

enhance her fame. But first, as a necessary precaution, she desired to know more than the mulatto had told her. This desire could be easily accomplished, for the white housekeeper was away shopping and she would not be likely to return for some time. Mammy Bean quickly decided that eavesdropping was the best way to verify Shansun's story.

Cautioning him to be quiet, she led the way through the house to a front room where Van Dorp and Ferguson were negotiating. The entrance to the room was covered by a portiere, and from where the listeners stood in the hall, the conversation of the white men, as they haggled over the price of the gem, came distinctly to their ears. They heard Van Dorp make a final offer in cash for the pearl, and they heard Ferguson accept the offer, although he insisted the black pearl was worth much more. Then Ferguson warned the Dutchman to put the pearl in a safer place than the tin box where he usually kept his collection of gems. But Van Dorp scoffed at the suggestion of robbery, even though Ferguson insisted that the colored people placed a sentimental value on the black pearl.

Mammy Bean had heard enough to convince herself that Shansun's black pearl was indeed a reality. Motioning to the mulatto to follow her, she rapidly and silently retreated to the rear of the house. There she impressed on Shansun the necessity of getting back to the boat before Ferguson came out of the house. The old negress had all the knowledge she required, and she planned to steal the black pearl without the aid of the mulatto.

The next morning Jan Van Dorp was found in bed, murdered. As our chief was away in New York on a vacation, the responsibility of probing the crime rested on my shoulders, so as soon as I got the news of the murder, I lost no time starting an investigation. With Luner, a colored detective, and Roane, our cleverest white detective, I arrived at the scene of the crime a few minutes after receiving the telephone message.

From Mrs. Wain, the widow who kept house for the old man, I got the pith of the tragedy. Briefly she told me that she had gone to arouse Van Dorp, as was customary every morning. She thought it strange that this morning he didn't answer her call. Opening the door of his bedroom, she glanced inside. To her horror she could see a large patch of blood on the white counterpane. Not waiting to investigate, for she instinctively felt that her master had been slain, she telephoned us. More than that, the agitated woman did not know. We left her and entered the bedroom.

On the bed lay Van Dorp, quite dead. From the nature of the fatal wound, I surmised that the murderer had thrust a dagger through the white quilt, into the heart of the old man. The position of the body, and the orderliness of the bedclothes, showed that the victim had been killed while asleep. Thus it was plain, if robbery were the object of the assassin, Van Dorp had moved in his sleep and so received his quietus. Satisfied as to the correctness of the theory, we then began a search of the room for possible clues.

A cursory glance indicated that everything was in order. None of the furniture had been disturbed, the windows were all fastened, and the inside shutters latched. It was not until Roane, who had been searching in the bureau drawers, found a flimsy tin cash-box that we got the semblance of a clue. The lock on the box had been forced open.

"Robbery!" said Roane, bringing out the box for a closer inspection. He raised the lid with the expectation that his opinion would be justified. But, much to our astonishment, in-

stead of the box being empty, it contained thirty yellowish pearls of various sizes. The find completely upset the theory of robbery as a motive for the crime. Leaving Luner and Roane to continue the search of the bedroom, I went to the kitchen. My intention was to question Mammy Bean, although I didn't feel very sanguine about getting much information from her.

As I entered the kitchen, the old negress, who sat rocking herself, stared curiously at me. That she understood the purpose of my visit was obvious, but whether she knew anything more than Mrs. Wain about the crime was a matter of conjecture. After some adroit questions, which she answered quite frankly, I reached the conclusion that Mammy Bean knew almost nothing of the murder. Thinking thus, I turned to leave the kitchen, but before I left I somehow felt prompted to try a bluff on the old crone. A few minutes previously, she had told me a white man had visited Van Dorp the day before, but she didn't know the name of the visitor. Her ignorance as to the identity of the man may have been an evasion, so I resolved to test her veracity.

"What did you say was the name of the man who saw your master yesterday?" I asked, sharply.

"Massa Ferguson," she replied, committing herself.

"Ha!" I said, elated at having drawn the information; "and what did Ferguson want? You may as well tell me, Mammy Bean. If you know it was Ferguson, you are sure to know the nature of his business with your master."

"He sold a black pearl. I listened to their talk," she told me sullenly.

A black pearl—that was indeed news to me. My astuteness had been amply justified, for the old negress had by a slip of her tongue given me a lead to a palpable clue. Robbery, after all, had been the cause of the murder of Van Dorp.

Realizing from the sullen demeanor of Mammy Bean that to question her further would be useless, I hurried out of the room. My lead pointed to Ferguson for additional information.

Acquainting Roane and Luner with the knowledge I had gained from the negress, I ordered them to stop the search. We had now to seek Ferguson.

Half an hour later, the bow of the police launch grounded on the beach at Agar's Island. Leaving Luner in charge of the launch, Roane and I walked along the path that led to Ferguson's hut. As we approached the place, Roane remarked that everything seemed quiet, adding that perhaps Ferguson and Shansun were away on a fishing trip.

I knocked on the door of the hut, and not receiving an answer I tried the latch. The door opened, and we stepped into a room, which the fisherman used as a living room. Roane rapped on the table and shouted for Ferguson. There was no reply, so thinking that he might be sleeping I drew aside a curtain that separated the bedroom from the living room. Stepping inside, I was startled at what I saw. Ferguson lay stretched on the floor, and his skull had been split.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Roane, he having followed me into the room, "someone must have given him a terrible blow on the head. Is he alive?"

"Just alive, and that's all," I said, as I stooped and examined the injured man. His pulse was weak, his breathing stertorous. Unless I was mistaken, Ferguson had almost reached the last lap of his earthly race.

In the meantime, Roane hurriedly searched the room. From under the bed he brought out a billet of hard cedar wood; on it there was blood and hair.

"Here's the weapon, been thrown under the bed," he said. "But I can't find another trace of his assailant."

"Never mind," I told him, "that can wait. We've got to rush Ferguson to the hospital."

I stooped for the purpose of lifting the injured man at the shoulders. Just as I was going to grasp him, he opened his eyes and stared at me. Quite distinctly he said, "Shansun. Last night. Beware the black pearl!" A gasp, a quiver of the body, and Ferguson passed away.

"Did you hear that?" I asked Roane.

"Yes," he replied.

"Shansun is our man," I said. "He's responsible for both murders."

CARRYING the body of Ferguson, we returned to the launch. I told Luner the details of the second crime. My recital of the facts did not greatly astonish the colored detective.

"The black pearl, sir, is at the bottom of the murders," he remarked. "Shansun either has it now, or else he has tried to get it. While you were away I strolled along the beach, and I discovered that Ferguson's skiff is missing from its moorings. In my opinion, the mulatto has taken the boat, rowed over to Main Island, and is now in hiding."

Luner's deductions seemed plausible. There was nothing to be gained by hunting for Shansun on Agar's Island. So we headed the launch back to Hamilton.

At headquarters, I immediately issued orders for the apprehension of Shansun. With his capture I felt certain we should have the murderer in our grip, together with the malignant pearl, the cause of all the trouble.

All day I stayed in the office anticipating the capture of the mulatto, but as the time passed and the men engaged in the hunt reported failure, I realized that somehow he was managing to elude us. Of course, I also knew, his capture was inevitable in a few days' time. Meanwhile, in view of Mammy Bean's connection with the case, I decided to hold her as a witness.

At dusk, Luner and I started from headquarters with the intention of bringing in the old negress. Leisurely, we sauntered along the Serpentine Road toward the Van Dorp house, and nothing happened to stay our progress until we had arrived at the big rubber tree, which stands at the side of the road, a few hundred yards from our destination. In the dim light we could see two men struggling beneath the tree.

"A fight!" exclaimed Luner, drawing his baton. Together we rushed toward the combatants, and were only an arm's length away from them as one of the men fell to the ground. The other man turned and fled. It was only the matter of a few yards before I grasped the fleeing man by the shoulder. He turned and faced me, and as he turned, a knife flashed in his hand. As he stabbed at me I avoided the blow by an adroit twist, and before he had a chance to use the weapon again, Luner's baton cracked on his head. Without even a groan, he dropped to the ground unconscious. Luner picked up the knife, which was smeared with blood, then he peered into the face of my assailant.

"Jonty Bean, Mammy Bean's son," he said, astonished.

"Jonty Bean!" I repeated, equally surprized. "I wonder where he fits into this puzzle? Put the handcuffs on him, Luner. We'll take him back to the tree."

Carrying Bean we walked to the place where the other man still lay prostrate. Laying down our manacled prisoner, we both looked at the man who had been struggling with

Jonty Bean. Simultaneously, we both recognized him.

"Shansun!" I exclaimed, while Luner gave a low whistle.

The mulatto stared at us, then he feebly tried to raise himself. But his effort was futile; groaning, he sank to the ground.

"I'm done, Massa Bruce," he mumbled. "Jonty Bean's stabbed me in the back. He thought I had the black pearl."

An hour later, Mammy and Jonty Bean were in cells, while Shansun was in the hospital. With Roane, I sat at the bedside of the mulatto taking down his ante-mortem statement, for Shansun was almost due to pass, another victim to the malignancy of the black pearl. Much of his story I have told you, but to enlighten you on some points, I will give you a summary of the mulatto's death-bed statement:

Shansun found the pearl. It was taken from him by Ferguson. Ferguson sold the gem to Van Dorp, and the mulatto and Mammy Bean listened to the negotiations. That night, in a spirit of revenge, Shansun split Ferguson's skull, stole the white fisherman's boat and came to Hamilton with the intention of stealing the pearl from Van Dorp. Previous to the attempt at theft, the mulatto circled around the bungalow, endeavoring to find the easiest point of entry. In his search he came to a window shutter, and part of one of the wooden laths had been broken off. Peering through the crack, he saw it was the old Dutchman's bedroom. Van Dorp was in bed, asleep, and the room was dimly lighted by a coal-oil lamp, for burning a light at night was one of his fads. As Shansun looked into the room, he was startled to see the door being cautiously opened. Jonty Bean entered, followed by Mammy Bean, and they went straight to the bureau where Van Dorp kept his box of pearls. As Jonty Bean pulled open the drawer, Van Dorp moved in bed. Then Jonty Bean stabbed the old man. After the murder he forced open the box. From the gesticulations of rage they both made as they examined the contents of the box, Shansun surmised that the black pearl, for which they were looking, had vanished. Then the mulatto fled from the scene. He went to the big rubber tree, for he knew that in the crotch of the tree there was a hollow of sufficient depth to conceal a man. All day he had lain hidden; at dusk he sneaked out with the intention of begging some food off Mammy Bean. Jonty and his mother were conversing at the rear of Van Dorp's house, when Shansun arrived there. They accused him of knowing the whereabouts of the black pearl, if he hadn't actually stolen it. The mulatto protested, declaring his innocence, then, becoming afraid of the threats of Mammy Bean, he ran away. Jonty Bean followed him, and in the fight that ensued, Shansun got a fatal wound. The mulatto swore he had not seen the pearl since it was in the hand of Ferguson.

That was Shansun's ante-mortem statement. It gave me a solution to the murders, but I was still puzzled as to the whereabouts of the black pearl.

Back at headquarters, I ordered that Mammy and Jonty Bean be brought from the cells. Now I had the deposition of Shansun, I had to charge Jonty Bean with the murder of Van Dorp, and Mammy Bean with being an accessory to the fact. While I awaited their arrival, I commenced to open the mail which lay on my desk. Until then I had been forced to neglect the official correspondence. The first letter I handled was in a thick, foolscap envelope. It was addressed to the chief, but in his absence I had authority to open all correspondence. I took the enclosure

out of the envelope, then I stared mystified, for a dozen blank sheets of writing paper had been used as a packing for another small envelope. I opened the smaller envelope, there was a letter inside, and also to my great astonishment—the black pearl.

I read the letter, it had been written by Van Dorp. He had penned:

"I have a premonition, which refuses to be banished, that the black pearl will be a cause of evil to me. Perhaps my mind has been influenced by the fear of the pearl, which seemed to possess Ferguson, the man from whom I bought the gem. He told me the colored people value the pearl as an emblem of luck, and they would have no scruples about stealing it. Ferguson's warning is good, so I have devised a plan to checkmate the possibility of a theft. Unknown to Mrs. Wain, I have put the pearl, together with this letter to you, in the middle drawer of the bureau in her room. With it, I have placed another letter addressed to her, which instructs her to mail the large envelope to you, should anything happen to me. Fear of a calamity has urged me to adopt this plan. Yet for all my fear, there is some satisfaction in knowing that I shall have outwitted the attempt of anyone who tries to steal the pearl."

As I finished reading the letter, I smiled at the old Dutchman's grim humor. Even while covered by the shadow of the unknown, Van Dorp could not resist the temptation to joke.

Picking up the pearl, I looked at it curiously. It was a good-colored, pear-shaped gem, and as I gazed at it, I pondered on the fate of the three blood-victims it had already claimed since it had been salvaged from the sea.

The entrance of the sergeant and the prisoners aroused me out of my imaginative mood. As the law demands, I cautioned them, then charged Jonty Bean and his mother with the murder of Jan Van Dorp. After I had finished, I picked the pearl off the desk and showed it to Mammy Bean.

"Was it for this your master was murdered?" I asked.

The expression changed on the face of the old negress. From the sullen, defiant look she had shown as she listened to the charge of murder, her face became distorted by a spasm of intense rage. Her mouth twitched and her body quivered, as she mumbled: "The black pearl! Where did you get it?"

"From Mrs. Wain," I said.

She stepped toward me, her hands outstretched as if she intended to grasp the gem. Then, as if her progress had been stayed by an invisible power, she stopped and laughed—a low, weird cackle.

"The black pearl!" she shrilled. "The black pearl, and there's *obi* on it. May it bring disaster, evil and death to those who touch it! May it blind the eyes of those who admire it! Blackness it is, and naught but blackness shall it give forth! May it sear and scorch the flesh of any woman who dares to——"

The dreadful incantation suddenly stopped. The old crone raised her hands to the heavens, then uttered a hideous cry as she fell to the floor with all her faculties completely paralyzed. A stroke, from which she never rallied, had seized her.

Her son, Jonty Bean, was convicted and hanged, thus making the fifth victim of the malignant pearl.

Despite the evil reputation of the black pearl, Sir Henry Klane bought it from the executors of the estate of Jan Van Dorp, and I often used to wonder whether the malignant gem had harmed anyone else. In my opinion, Vince, the Countess of Clamnel was lucky—very lucky, I should say, to escape death.

APRICOTS from ISPAHAN

By

E. Hoffmann Price

"The great two-handed blade rose high, paused an instant ere it began its shearing sweep."

THE sultan Schamas-ad-Din of Djalan-batû yawned prodigiously, rubbed his eyes, blinked, and adjusted his turban. An attendant rearranged the pile of cushions wherefrom the prince had emerged, so that His Highness might more comfortably resume the sitting posture from which he had slumped an hour ago.

A second attendant, kneeling, presented a tray of sweetmeats and a flagon of chilled wine. A third offered the sultan the stem of a narghileh. But the prince wished neither to drink nor to smoke.

"Absál," said the sultan to the scribe who sat at the foot of his master's dais, "of what were we speaking?"

"These papers, my lord."

The wrinkled, leathery old scribe thrust before the sultan's sleepy eyes a bundle of papers and documents.

"Quite so, Absál."

Another world-engulfing yawn.

"Take them out and attend to them. I am very busy today. And by the way, have the apricots arrived?"

"Not yet, my lord. It is a long, hard trip from Persia."

The scribe withdrew, scowling at the great sheaf of papers that represented the neglected affairs of the realm.

The sultan sucked a wisp of smoke from his narghileh, sipped a bit of wine, stroked his curled beard, then turned to the eunuch who guarded the entrance to the harem.

"Saoud, didn't you pick up a Kashmiri dancing girl the other day?"

"She awaits my lord's pleasure."

And without further command, the eunuch entered the seraglio to summon the Kashmiri.

From behind a carven teakwood screen at the sultan's right came the wailing, piping, mournful notes of reed instruments, and the faint pulsing of atabals. The concealed musicians had been awaiting their cue, even as had the Kashmiri girl who was about to make her debut before the sultan.

The piping subsided. Then came three thin, vibrant, shivering notes of a gong; and, as the sighing, whining reeds resumed their cadence, the Kashmiri entered the presence.

Silent, shadowlike, she picked her way across the tiled floor, each step a formal pose to display her slim, serpentine perfection for the sultan's approval. And then she danced with weaving, twining steps and sinuous arms: lithe, wondrous swift, with gesture and contortion that aroused even the phlegmatic despot from his lethargy. A silken veil rippling in the breeze; a moonbeam shimmering on a sword-blade; a wisp of smoke curling from a censer; all these, but surely not a woman it was whose gilded limbs gleamed before the nodding prince. Neither bracelet nor anklet tinkled; for this being her first appearance, she was without jewels, without any tokens of the master's approval.

Again the gong behind the screen shivered its thin, rustling note. The Kashmiri sank in obeisance before her lord to receive from his hand some trophy to flaunt before her rivals in the seraglio.

Schamas-ad-Din drew from his pouch a small, heavy purse, weighed it in his hand a moment, and replaced it. Then from his turban he removed the wondrous Father of Fire, a great, livid ruby that flared fiercely from its bed of diamonds.

"You are from the Valley of Kashmir? And your name?"

"Istalani, my lord."

The girl's eyes gleamed welcome to the magnificence that smoldered before her.

"Ah, yes, I remember now. Kashmir . . . a land of rich gardens. . ."

The sultan fingered the massive ruby and its adamantine companions.

"Rich gardens . . . the finest and loveliest of my apricot trees, even now on the way from Ispahan, shall be named after you," concluded the sultan as with a magnificent gesture he dismissed the girl and replaced the glowing jewel in his turban.

Whereupon Schamas-ad-Din arose from his dais and went into the gardens to prepare with his own hands the earth that was to receive the long-awaited apricot trees.

Affairs of state and the administrative duties of a monarch were nothing, and less than nothing, to the Sultan Schamas-ad-Din of Djalanbatû. Absál, the ancient secretary and ex-captain of the guard he had inherited from his father, had the administration of affairs so well in hand that the horticultural prince had but to sign on the dotted line, then spend the remainder of the day in his gardens. At times, of course, he would in person dispense capricious justice in the halls of public or private audience, and at times pause for an hour of soporific music and the intricate dances of his sultanas; but these were after all but distractions from his important mission in life, that of pottering about in his extensive gardens. Here, certainly, was the perfect, un-

troubled life of a prince who reigned painlessly and without care.

The following morning, as was his custom, Absál awaited the sultan in his study and arranged for his inspection the previous day's accumulation of papers: petitions, communications from neighboring princelings, statements from the *Feringhi* engineers who worked the rich mineral deposits of Djalan-batû and for the privilege paid royalties so heavy that the taxation of the sultan's subjects had become a useless formality. And all these affairs were handled as capably by Absál as they had been administered by the chief wazir whose recent death had left the scribe heir to the duties, though not the rank, of the deceased.

The responsibilities were Absál's, though not the title, the prestige, nor the privilege of that high office. And for this the old man had to thank Zaid, the court astrologer, the crafty star-gazer who played well and skilfully on the sultan's credulity. Schamas-ad-Din had informally promised Absál the post of chief wazir; and then he had become evasive. In due course the truth leaked out, reaching the scribe's ears in a fairly complete report of the conversation that had wrecked his chances of advancement.

". . . Absál doubtless is learned, but he is simple-minded . . . lacking in the astuteness requisite to a chief wazir, one who must partake in a measure of my lord's cunning and shrewdness . . . consider, my lord, the unhappy configuration, here in the sixth house. And see, here in the ascendant, what unfavorable signs . . . surely my lord will not consider elevating Absál to that high position when all the omens and all the stars are against it. . ."

And then the sultan had sidestepped, asking the astrologer who, then, he would recommend. Whereat the astrologer had dissembled, not deeming it wise at that time to offer his own uncle as a candidate; for even the sultan's obtuseness had its limits.

All this Absál learned and in a measure verified by seeing that day by day the uncle of the astrologer became more and more prominent at court. But the scribe could do no more than curse all stars and all star-gazers, and patiently wait for the opportunity that would enable him to discredit his enemy.

The scribe had scarcely commenced his day's work when Zaid entered, laden with charts, and resplendent in the garb of his office.

"And with you be peace," returned Absál to the astrologer's salutation, then resumed his task.

Before the scribe had arranged the portfolio of documents in heaps according to their nature and ultimate disposal, the sultan himself entered, preceded by eight cadaverous Annamite fan-bearers, and followed by his personal attendants.

"A thousand years!" greeted Zaid and the scribe as they made their salaam to the prince.

"What news this morning, Absál?"

"The *Feringhi* engineers seem bent on robbing us."

"And what of my apricot trees?" interrupted the sultan, before the scribe could report on the mining syndicate.

"They arrived last night, my lord. Here is a message from the head porter. Now as to the *Feringhi*. . ."

"Let that wait. You should have notified me last night the moment those trees arrived. Zaid, determine a day propitious to their planting. And you, Absál, check them in immediately, and note their condition carefully. Report to me as soon as you are through."

The astrologer busied himself with his charts.

Absál departed on his urgent mis-

sion, letting the affairs of the realm take care of themselves.

"Each worth its weight in gold, and more," reflected the scribe, as he checked those young apricot trees whose commonplace appearance belied their precious character, priceless in view of their long trip from Persia, and doubly so in view of the sultan's whim.

"Seventy-two . . . seventy-three . . . this one can not survive . . . seventy-four . . . this one has been scorched . . . seventy-five . . . someone's head will answer for this . . . seventy-six . . . seventy-seven . . . boy, the sultan spoke of forty trees; and there are over eighty in this lot."

"You are right, uncle. But look at their labels and you will see that they are not all apricot trees, even though they do look much alike. Half of them are nectarines."

"Well then, and did he also order nectarines?"

"No. But the head porter brought them along as a bit of speculation. It costs no more to carry eighty than forty. He will sell them in the *souk* today."

"So . . . well, help me sort them out. And by the way, I may buy some of those nectarines for my own garden. Gardening is the great game here . . . perhaps the road to royal favor," mused the scribe as he departed.

When Absál sought the sultan to inform him that the trees had been checked in and were in good condition, he found him still in conference with Zaid, who, with charts deployed, was laying his customary fog of astrological jargon.

"A few have been slightly damaged, my lord; but the count is nevertheless in excess of what you expected. I have just turned them over to the chief gardener."

"Allah forbid! I must plant them with my own hands, three days hence, at an hour to be named by Zaid. Tell Musa . . . never mind, I'll tell him myself."

"But what of these papers, my lord?"

"Take them with you. I will be busy all day. You can handle them."

Upon leaving the sultan, Absál sought the head porter and bought the lot of nectarine slips, paying then and there the exorbitant price he demanded. This done, he made short work of affairs of state. But despite his haste, it was late in the afternoon before he was free to pursue some recently conceived plans of his own.

His first move was to go in search of Musa, the chief gardener; not at his house, but in the various *caravanserai* and wine shops near the *souk*. In the third tavern he found Musa, drunk, as usual, but not, as Absál expected, riotously gleeful.

"Peace be with you, friend Musa," saluted the scribe.

The gardener returned the peace, and, flattered at the notice of so high a person, offered him wine. And with the wine he inflicted his latest grievance, told how the sultan had, in the presence of the gardeners under him, strictly forbidden him to touch those precious apricot trees; had forbidden him, Musa, to set out those accursed trees from Persia.

"Well now," thought Absál, as he heard the gardener's sorrows, "this is excellent. The chances are that I'll not even have to suggest it. . . Still . . . it might never occur to this ass of a gardener that it would be a rare jest to sprinkle salt about the roots of those fiend-begotten trees, and then watch them mysteriously wilt and die. . ."

After numerous drafts of Musa's wine, Absál contrived to put in a few words of his own.

"That is what I call lack of appreciation! To think of affronting you,

who for twenty years served his father, upon whom be peace!"

"And exceeding prayer!" interjected Musa. "That was bad enough; but that was but half of it."

The gardener gulped a glass of wine, grimaced fiercely, and simmered in his grievances.

"So. . . Really, you interest me strangely, Musa. Come to my house where we can talk in privacy, and drink Shirazi from the sultan's own cellar," suggested Absál.

And thus it was that shortly after sunset, the scribe and the chief gardener reeled across the courtyard of the palace, chanting in broken, uncertain cadence. The gardener's gloom was alternated with flashes of his usual good humor. With song and denunciation drunkenly mingled, they tottered into Absál's quarters; and, upon the advent of the scribe's servant with a jar of Shirazi, began anew the discussion of their several sorrows.

"Drink wine, oh my brother, for the world is but a breath of wind," hiccupped Absál, who was scarce as drunk as he seemed.

"Iblis fly away with your wine," protested the gardener.

But unable to resist the old man's invitation to drink the master's wine, he drained the glass at a draft.

"And the black hands of Abbadon strangle all sultans and all astrologers!"

"Especially all astrologers," suggested Absál.

"Especially all sultans!" contradicted Musa.

"Well now, friend, you have your grievances. But why feel so bitter about it? The chances are that the gardeners under you did not even hear the sultan's words."

Musa stared somberly into the depths of his Cairene goblet.

"A mere trifle, that. Come now, Musa, tell me the truth," wheedled the scribe. "What is on your mind? If I remember rightly, you suggested. . ."

"Many things. Remember, ten days ago, they sold a Kashmiri girl in the *souk?* Lovely as the morning star. . ."

"Remember? Well now, and were I not an old man, I would have bought her myself. And it seems to me that you were there, bidding heavily."

"To what end?" queried the gardener dolorously. "That fat eunuch outbid me in behalf of the sultan, that old wind-bag with more girls than he could name in a day. Oh, loveliest of all loveliness! And that father of many little piglings robbed me of her, bidding his great wealth against my poverty. And I could have bought her otherwise, for no one else was bidding against me."

"So that is the lay of the land, eh, Musa? Well, and I should grieve also, were I in your place. But is it not written. . ."

"Rot! You with your Persian verses. . ."

"Softly, Musa, softly! Do you suppose that the Kashmiri was pleased with the bargain? Surely she would prefer a handsome young fellow like yourself. And didn't she weep when Saoud led her to the palace?"

And then Absál, to whom came all palace gossip, related the tale of the Kashmiri's debut, and of her rich reward.

"Named a tree after her!"

The gardener spat disgustedly, then stared sourly at the gilded scrolls on the wall.

"Tell me, Musa, are you really a man of courage? Do you really want the girl? It happens that Saoud has me to thank that his head is still above his shoulders. He can refuse me nothing within reason. I think—I am sure it could be arranged."

The ensuing half-hour was spent in smothering the gardener's protesta-

tions of gratitude and assurances as to his courage.

THE succeeding three days were slow of passage, weary and anxious and nerve-racking to gardener and sultan alike. The former thought of the lovely Kashmiri behind the barred windows of the seraglio, looking, perhaps, into the very garden wherein he worked; the latter counted the hours and fretfully awaited the sunset of that day which would be favorable to the planting of those fine young apricot trees from Ispahan.

Absál went about his duties as usual. At times he permitted himself a shadow of a smile as his lean old talons stroked his long, white beard. And the smile widened whenever he caught sight of the astrologer. The old man even went so far as to purchase a silver-white *Kochlani* stallion, richly caparisoned after the Moorish fashion.

"A chief wazir," he reflected, "should be well mounted when he appears in public."

SUNSET of the third day. The astrologer, with the sultan at his side, stood in the garden, waiting for the lord of the sign to rise into the position of good omen. At last he lowered his astrolabe.

"Now, my lord, you may plant the first tree. The one named after the Kashmiri. And be assured that they will flourish and prosper in the shadow of your magnificence," he concluded, as he received from the sultan's hand a small purse, heavy as only gold could make it.

Musa stood by with the necessary implements, fidgeting and pacing about as the sultan with scrupulous care set each tree in place, checked its alinement with its mates, irrigated it with rose-water. And from time to time the chief gardener glanced over his shoulder at a cavernous, barred window overlooking the garden.

The sultan, wearied at last by his own frenzy of enthusiasm, left the garden, followed by the astrologer.

No sooner had the gate closed after them than Absál emerged from the shadow of a plane-tree. The gardener approached at the scribe's low whistle.

"She is expecting you, Musa."

"And she will go?"

"She favors you. But it is for you to persuade her. Tap at the bars of that window. And if you can convince her of your worth, she will tell you of the means I have devised for her escape. I will be waiting with horses just outside the garden wall. You can pass the sentries at the Eastern Gate, and once clear, ride across the border into Lacra-kai, where you can rest secure under the protection of an old friend of mine high in the rajah's favor. Or would you rather not leave the service of the master you have served so long?"

"Iblis fly away with all sultans! . . . What's that?" whispered Musa, lowering his voice at the sound of a heavy step and the tinkle of spurs just outside the garden gate.

"Only the captain of the guard on his way to inspect the sentries along the city wall. If he is at the gate, you can not pass, even though I have bribed the sentries. So lose no time! And I will go out on the wall and detain him."

Whereupon Absál departed to seek the captain of the guard, leaving Musa to meet his fate at the barred window.

After several unsuccessful attempts, Musa drew himself to the crest of the wall, just beneath the window, whose sill was at about the height of his shoulders. With the garden keys he tapped lightly on the bars; waited a moment; tapped again.

Silence, save for the splashing waters of a near-by fountain; not a

sound came from within the seraglio. Standing there on the wall beneath that forbidden window, Musa felt all the eyes of Djalan-batû were impaling him. And from the blackness within he felt destruction blindly groping to reach and strangle him. He cursed the dazzling whiteness of the moonlight; shivered at the thought of what would befall him if his mad escapade were witnessed; damned all scribes and all Kashmiri girls; but, just on the point of sinking back into the garden, he collected himself and tapped again.

Out of the blackness of that forbidden apartment came a breath of jasmine, and musk, and nenufar; then a misty, nebulous whiteness materialized, took form before his eyes; the Kashmiri, lovely beyond the maddest of all desires, was at the window, her slim fingers curled about the bars that kept him from her. She smiled graciously, as might a goddess at the adoration of a clown.

Before that wondrous beauty Musa felt his courage evaporate. Who would dare aspire to such perfection?

"You are the Emir Musa whom the sultan outbid in the *souk?*"

She had mistaken him, a gardener, for an emir!

"Even so, Lady of Beauty. And I am here to take you to Lacra-kai, where I have powerful friends."

"You will take me . . . if I will go."

"But you will go. For I love and desire you as no man ever desired any woman."

"But the danger. . ."

"Hurry, and we are safe. Didn't you smile at me as I made my bids, and weep when they took you to the sultan? Surely you will go . . . tonight."

"I might . . . I will . . . if . . ." she conceded.

"If what?"

"If you will first uproot those accursed apricot trees to leave a fare-well token for that old wine-skin who named one of them after me! They mock me day and night, those female hyenas! Anywhere, Musa. . . The bars of this window have been sawed at the top. So destroy those trees and then release me."

"We have no time."

"Nonsense."

"Then kiss me, Wondrous One."

"First uproot those wretched trees and I will deny you nothing. Hurry!"

A low, rippling laugh, half of delight, half of mockery, urged the gardener to his task as he dropped from his perch upon the wall.

Vengeance, and the Kashmiri, and then a fast horse. . .

"My lord," announced Absâl, shortly after the hour of morning prayer of the following day, "there are numerous letters that require your personal attention."

"Write the answers yourself and have them ready for me when I return. I am going to inspect. . ."

"A thousand years!" saluted the captain of the guard as he clanked to a halt at the foot of the dais.

"Why this haste, Isa?" snapped the sultan. "Riots? Insurrection?"

"Worse than that, my lord. A madman entered the gardens last night and uprooted. . ."

"What? My apricots?"

"Even so. I captured him last night as he was uprooting the last tree."

"Carve him in a thousand pieces! Impale him! Flay him alive!" sputtered the sultan. "Bring him in immediately."

And then and there the sultan rushed into the garden, cursing the earth, and the heavens, and the powers that made them both. Isa was right: not a tree had been left in place. Each of those precious apricot slips had been uprooted and broken, and now lay wilting in the fierce

morning sun, ruined beyond all redemption.

"All the way from Ispahan," mourned Schamas-ad-Din as he staggered back to the throne-room, stunned and dumb from the sight of that ruin.

Coincident with the sultan's return from the scene of destruction was the arrival of Isa, followed by a detachment of the guard.

"The prisoner, my lord," announced the captain, indicating the heavily shackled culprit.

The sultan, upon recognizing Musa, exploded afresh.

Realizing the enormity of his offense, the gardener knew that there remained but to learn the sultan's fancy in unusual torments. There was no plea to be offered. With dumb resignation he faced the sultan's frenzy. To say that the Kashmiri had urged him to the deed would but add to the sultan's wrath.

As from a great distance now came the sultan's choking, apoplectic tirade. At the right of the dais stood the African executioner, fingering his crescent-bladed simitar. And there was the astrologer who had caused him, Musa, to be humiliated before his subordinates. Very trivial it all seemed now. And to the left sat the scribe, calm, expressionless, placidly stroking his long, white beard; there was the man who had urged him to his madness. It all seemed unreal, fantasmal. And the sultan's torrent of wrath rolled on, threatening torment without end for him, Musa.

Then the scribe smiled as one viewing a spectacle that, though wearisome, still has its amusing features. Absál, the cause of it all, smiling!

"It's his fault, my lord! The Kashmiri told me to destroy them. . ."

And thus, incoherently, he blurted forth the entire story.

The astrologer's exultation was boundless.

"Did I not prophesy, my lord? What manner of chief wazir would this old traitor Absál have been?"

The sultan choked; turned the color of an old saddle.

The African glanced from one culprit to the other, wondering which would first need his attention.

And then the captain of the guard put in a word.

"My lord, this man is stark mad. Absál had nothing to do with it. In fact, it was he who informed me that a maniac was uprooting your trees, and sent me to capture him. But I was too late to save the apricots."

"Even so, my lord," confirmed Absál, after crucifying the astrologer with a glance, "I found him in the *caravanserai*, drunk with wine and drugged with hasheesh. He babbled of the affront offered him when my lord with his own hands desired to plant those trees. And he raved of a Kashmiri girl. Look and see whether there are hoof-prints where he claimed that horses were waiting to take him and the girl to Lacra-kai. And see also whether the bars in that window are really sawed through. What? Am I to answer for the frenzy of a madman?"

All of which convinced the sultan.

"Anoint him in boiling oil! Bathe him with molten lead!" coughed the prince, indicating Musa. "No, carve him in small pieces here and now!"

Four members of the guard, each seizing a limb, dragged the gardener to his knees on the tiles before the dais.

The African advanced, gaged the distance, twice stamped the tiles and set himself, all poised to strike. The great two-handed blade rose high, paused an instant ere it began its shearing sweep . . .

"Stop!"

The clear voice of the old scribe startled the African with its note of command, so that the rhythm of his stroke was broken. He lowered his blade and glared at Absál.

The sultan leaped to his feet.

"He is not guilty," declared the scribe.

"What? Didn't he admit his guilt?"

"Even so, *he* is not guilty."

"Explain yourself," snapped the sultan.

"Mountain of Wisdom," began the scribe, "why did you with your own hand set out those trees instead of letting Musa plant them?"

The scribe's calm insolence amazed the sultan into answering.

"Because the learned astrologer had named a fortunate day for their planting. And then this imbecile uproots them, after they had been set out under favorable omens."

"Even so, Light of the World," interposed the star-gazer. "The signs. . ."

"Now, by the Prophet's beard and by your life!" exulted Absál. "This astrologer is the true criminal! He said that such and such was the fortunate hour, and lo, behold them already dying! Uprooted and ruined! What manner of prophecy is this?"

"My lord. . ."

"Silence, fool! He is right. Son of an infidel pig, why did you name such an unfortunate hour?"

The African renewed his grip on the hilt of his simitar and sought the sultan's eye. Two members of the guard advanced toward the star-gazer.

"Impale him in the square. Flay him alive and stretch his hide on the Eastern Gate," directed the sultan. "And you, Absál, publish a proclamation banishing all astrologers from the city."

"Spare his worthless carcass, my lord," protested Absál. "Scourge him out of the city, but spare his life. For your apricots are safe and sound. I anticipated that this ass of an astrologer would cast a false horoscope, so I took your trees from the porters and in their place substituted nectarines, which you set out. And thus your apricots await your pleasure."

"ABSAL," remarked the sultan that evening, as they watched Musa setting out the apricots from Ispahan, "this was all a most curious affair . . . this Kashmiri, by the way, is not really to my taste. Perhaps you would accept her as a token. . ."

"Peace and prayer upon my lord, but forty years ago, when I served in the guard, I had my fill of strife and battle. Why not give her to Musa, so that each may be the other's punishment?"

"But you are a subtle man, Absál," replied the admiring prince. "And now that you are chief wazir, I may be able to devote more time to my gardens."

A Snake-tale of India

The Mystic Bowl

By EUGENE CLEMENT D'ART

"MERRY" Roy McFarland, the American builder of bridges, who reached India in the flower of his youth and reveling in the happiness of honeymoon times, returned to New York a few months later, a single, broken man.

Out of the all-pervading jungle had come devastating vengeance, swift, silent and merciless, exacting a life for a life. And this which was intended to bring laughter to the hearts of men turned in an instant to grim tragedy.

Shaken to the core, they who had sought amusement reluctantly left Roy alone with the ghastly remains of the girl he loved that he might weep unashamed and wonder as all wondered at the manner of her death.

Nor would the mystery have been solved, were it not for Hadji, the fakir, who mirrored the memory of things in the clear waters of the Mystic Bowl.

ANN MCFARLAND had followed her young husband to San Francisco, then to Jaipur and then to Khatu, on the edge of the desert. She loved India, perhaps because she worshiped her husband—and he was in India. With him beside her, she would have loved any land. But the jungle filled her with apprehension and snakes with dread, nameless and unreasoning.

Young people do foolish things. Roy decided to cure her of this which seemed senseless fear and was perhaps instinct.

From the jungle, one day, came a band of natives, beating tom-toms, singing and triumphantly dragging the sinuous shape of a cobra they had killed. Roy bought their trophy, hiding it in the long grass near the bungalow until evening came.

After dark, while Ann prepared refreshments, he told his plan to the postmaster and the British lieutenant who had drifted in as had become their custom. The dead snake rested on the couch in the bedroom. That she might not be frightened more than was necessary, they would discuss snakes and warn Ann. Then Roy would trump up some excuse and send her into the room. She would scream, no doubt. Then they would demonstrate how harmless snakes are —when they are dead. And all would laugh.

The two strangers readily entered into the spirit of the jest. When Ann returned, snakes formed the topic of conversation. She frowned lightly.

"Please don't!" she asked. "You know how I hate snakes!"

"Because you do not know them," returned the postmaster. "The majority of snakes fear you as much as you fear them. Barring the deadly cobra, they will strike human beings only in self-defense."

"I bet," smiled the lieutenant, "that Mrs. McFarland would be frightened if she saw a dead snake!"

"Why, no," exclaimed the young wife, "dead snakes do not bite!"

"Still, if you suddenly came upon

a dead snake, somewhere in the house, I am certain——"

"Tush! How could a dead snake come into the house?"

"Excuse me, dear," broke in McFarland, "would you mind bringing me a clean handkerchief?"

Ann walked into the bedroom. The three men looked at each other, smiling and listening expectantly. To reach the little table on which rested the lamp, she had to pass the couch. She would light the lamp, turn around and then——

But she did not light the lamp. In the dark, she uttered a terrific scream. Then she suddenly appeared at the door, a tragic, swaying figure, deathly pale, her arm extended, showing two small, red punctures.

"I have been bitten——" she said.

Before anyone could reach her side, she fainted. Two hours later, she was dead. In the bedroom, the lifeless form of the snake still lay stretched on the couch, as Roy had arranged it. They removed the horrible thing and in its place, gently, very gently, Roy and the lieutenant set down the remains of this living ray of sunshine that had been Ann McFarland. At the window, near the foot of the bed, the mosquito netting was flapping in the breeze. Mechanically, the postmaster pulled it back into place.

For days, within the screen walls of the bungalow porch, Roy sat on his hammock, stupefied, oblivious of his surroundings, irresponsive to the sympathy of friends.

She who had been everything to him was buried at the edge of the jungle she feared, the jungle that had brought her death. And now, nothing mattered.

A hand was softly laid on Roy's shoulder. He was conscious of dark eyes peering kindly into his own. Hadji's bland, melodious voice reached his ear.

"Forget, sahib! You must forget! Death is part of life—a change—a becoming. Because there is birth, there is death. Ay, *sahib,* she still lives. Change has come and altered the face of things but this which is can not cease to be. Life is an eternal becoming. Sorrow, *sahib,* is an extreme, an evil, a passion that must be controlled. We must follow the Middle Path, *sahib,* and forget!"

"If only I knew how she died, Hadji! The snake was dead! How can a dead snake bite?"

"The ways of the world are strange, *sahib.* It seems incredible that a dead snake should bite. And yet, perchance, the soul of the snake—though this too seems impossible—but who knows? Perhaps, if you wish to learn, I can show you how it happened."

Roy looked up slowly, then, his throat parched, asked: "How?"

"It is difficult to explain, though you may understand. I have once seen a camera and was told how it worked. Pictures of objects that are before this camera register through a lens on the film. Now, *sahib,* as soon as the picture has been taken, it *is* on the film. Yet, it can not be seen—not until the film has been treated. Things have a memory, *sahib,* all things photograph happenings—even thoughts. But the proper lens is needed for us to see and that lens is within ourselves. If you wish, *sahib,* I shall tell you what to do and then you may learn how the dead snake struck——"

"What must I do?"

"The room where death passed is impregnated with the memory of this which has happened. Let us first go there."

Mechanically, Roy led the way and then watched Hadji place on the table a small bowl, a plain wooden bowl similar to those carried by Hindoo Holy Men. This he filled with water and, turning to Roy:

"Have you anything that has belonged to her?" he asked.

Roy frowned.

"I have her diamond ring," he said hesitatingly as, handling it with infinite care, he brought out the jewel.

"I shall not touch it, *sahib*. Place it yourself in the bowl."

Roy watched it sink. And now Hadji became the master who directed his actions:

"Watch the ring, *sahib*, look at the diamond, only at the diamond. The water is a mirror. In this mirror you will see all that has happened. Do you not see the room, dark, as it was when death came? Look at the diamond, only at the diamond, *sahib!*"

Strange drowsiness overcame Roy's senses as he stared at the stone that glimmered at the bottom of the water. Then, all at once, it seemed that the diamond and the bowl grew and grew and the water within the bowl encompassed the whole room, plunged in semi-darkness, as it was that night. On the couch, Roy could dimly perceive the shape of the dead snake.

Faintly, as if they came from a great distance, Roy heard Hadji's words: "The window! Watch the window!"

The lower corner of the mosquito netting vibrated under the empire of some exterior force. It gave way. A repulsive head appeared through the opening, the head of a cobra. Then the reptile crawled in through the window, to the bed, until it reached the side of the dead snake. And still, distantly, faintly, came Hadji's voice:

"Its mate, *sahib*, the mate of the dead snake. The cobra that was killed was dragged through the jungle and the one that remained alive followed its scent. It has come to seek its mate and now that it has found it dead, it will kill. Watch the door, *sahib!*"

Ann walked in, her form silhouetted against the light in the other room. She started toward the lamp, but as she passed the couch, the cobra struck and, apparently frightened by her scream, turned swiftly to the window and glided through the opening it had made.

Song of the Brothers of Mercy*

By FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER

(Translated by Francis Hard)

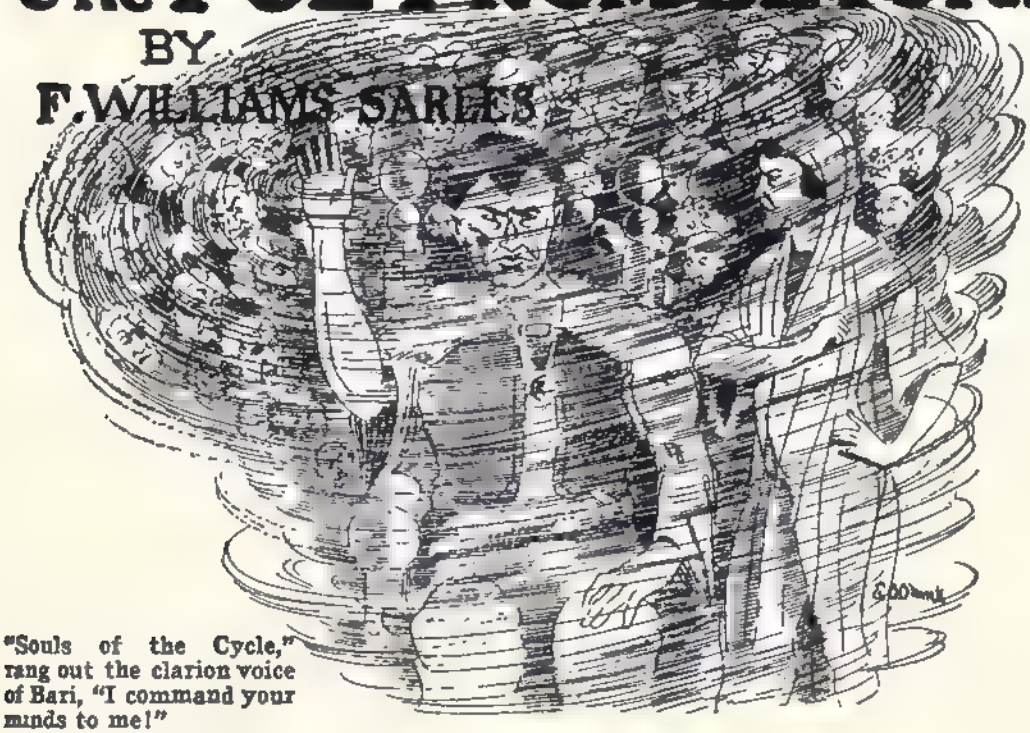
With rapid pace on strideth Death;
No breathing spell to man is given:
Midway the course Death stops his breath,
And sends him to his God unshriven;
And whether he's prepared or no,
Each man before his Judge must go.

* From "Wilhelm Tell."

The FOE FROM BEYOND

BY

F. WILLIAMS SARLES



"Souls of the Cycle," rang out the clarion voice of Bari, "I command your minds to me!"

MAJESTIC columns on every side, rising in grandeur until their tops were lost in the infinity of space. Forests of them, gleaming with ineffable splendor, enclosing at their gigantic bases a coliseum, completely surrounding a platform supported by alternate black and white pillars, seven of them to every side of a pentagon.

From the platform, tier upon tier of encircling steps radiated back to the columns, which, from this place in the center, seemed hazy in the immeasurable distance.

On the platform was a splendid throne. Intricate in its designs, delicate in the tracery of mystic symbols which covered every surface, it could not be said to have any definite color, for it constantly changed its hue, as though lights of sublime beauty were suffusing it. At no time did it seem real.

Over the whole was an atmosphere of unreality, an ethereal tone, as though this mighty temple were a thing of ephemeral, fairylike beauty and quality, to vanish at a breath.

A breath? It would vanish at a thought, for this tremendous structure had been created by thought, the only reality in the Second Cycle.

At this particular pin-point of time in the eternity of the Cycle, some event of moment was about to take place. The vast theater suddenly became misty, half-sounds whispered through its immensity. Vague shadows seemed to flit about, to become half real at times, only to slip back into nothingness. After a short while all this ceased. There was a moment of deathlike silence, as if the very condition of being were held suspended. Then—tier upon tier of the steps held white, robed figures, each with eyes fixed on the throne in the center.

The Thought Council had con-

vened, that august body which through Bari guides the course of the Second Cycle.

The Second Cycle! Abode of the Dead!

Ever since the day Paul Duval discovered the ray which separates the soul from the body, I had been caught in a whirl of events, the like of which has never before been the experience of any man. Even now, I find it hard to believe that it was I, Harry Chaptel, who witnessed and took part in these scenes, or that it was a mere human like Paul Duval who brought them to pass.

Some of you have read my previous accounts of Duval's weird experiment, and of how Duval and I entered the realm of Tasmari, Queen of the Vortex. But for those who have not, I shall briefly sketch what happened.

Paul Duval had begun with the theory that since matter and energy are indestructible, so, too, must be that force which is neither. Some call it the Soul, others the Intelligence. He held that since it was "Intelligence," it must of its own nature remain an entity even after it had left the body.

To reason thus was one thing, to prove it another. If his reasoning were accurate, he thought it likely the entity released from the body was of some fluidic matter, too tenuous to reflect the sun's light, hence invisible. Since the eyes are capable of registering but a small fraction of the total sun's rays, to make his "spirits" visible, he set out to fashion an apparatus which would make all the rays visible to the eyes, and hence, by reflection, bring the departed soul to the sight of man.

The result of his work was the ray and the screen against which it was projected. The joint action of the two made any spirit body, interposed between the screen and the projectors of the ray, visible.

Yes, Duval succeeded in his quest, but often have I wished he had failed. At any rate, the ray proved the truth of his deduction, and it soon showed itself possessed of other powers on which he had not reckoned.

One night a woman's form came into the beam of the ray. At sight of her Duval's lips parted in a wondering cry.

"Marguerite," he murmured, and I knew the shade for the soul of the only woman Paul had ever loved, and to whose memory he remained faithful, though she had died years before.

She held out her arms to him. He entered the ray and fell to the floor as he kissed her. Then his spirit rose from the inert body and went away with the woman, leaving his body alive, yet dead, in the ray-flood. I say "alive yet dead" advisedly, for though it could maintain life if fed, the brain housed no thoughts, no will guided the aimless motions of the body. Intelligence, or if you wish, the soul, had fled. Do not tell me the "soul" and "life" are identical. Duval's body, after the Intelligence had gone, was only a shell. That body had no more soul than a jelly-fish, though, as in a jelly-fish, the spark of life was present.

Thus was the discovery made that the ray could separate the soul from the body, leaving the body a fit habitation for the soul's return. Not like death, which leaves the machine so damaged the life-force can not animate the body.

It was five years before I heard again from Duval. Then his voice came to me over the radio, ordering me to recondition the apparatus for making the ray. I did so.

Having accomplished a projection, I was myself hurled into the Second Cycle, being hypnotized by the eyes of a figure which the ray partially materialized, into entering the ray. At one moment I was safe in the laboratory. The next, and I was looking

into the room from the reverse side of the screen, which appeared to me as a doorway leading back. But to enter that door again was not allowed to me until much had happened.

The Second Cycle is a realm of thought. It is the empire of souls departed from life, co-existent with the material world, a part and yet not a part of the universe. Thought is the only reality, the only force, the only material, there. It is another dimension, the second cycle of the spirit's progress toward something beyond,—perhaps perfection.

Bari rules it by the power of thought. Each soul on entering must give over to Bari's control that part of its being we know as the subconscious. The part we know as the conscious will is retained. But Bari has a Thought Council, faithful to him, as you shall see, which he controls by the massed force of the subconscious wills in the Cycle, even as the Council governs the massed wills by the power of suggestion. Bari controls the thought flow from either direction.

Hating Marguerite for luring Duval into the ray, I soon had cause to love her as greatly as I had hated. Without her, we should still be in the power of Bari and Tasmari.

I found Duval set apart in the Cycle. By the power of thought an insulation known as an "isolation barrier," seemingly composed of some clear, strange, amberlike substance, had been thrown about him. It held him motionless and prevented his thoughts from going out, or thoughts of others from reaching him. Alone I could not have freed him. But Marguerite showed me the way. Concentrating my thought on the barrier itself, I had broken it down, though by some odd force, I was nearly drawn into it beside Duval.

Duval told me he had incurred Bari's enmity because he dared to desire to return to the Life Side and rejoin his body. Bari feared for his power if the souls on the Life Side became acquainted with the fact they must yield their subconsciousness on entering the Cycle. If enough refused this, Bari's rule would end.

The one thing feared by the souls in the Cycle was the Vortex. What it was none knew. Some thought it was the end of the soul cast therein, that it was the "death of the soul;" others that it was the entrance to a next state of existence, which all believed they would attain. Some thought it meant annihilation. None knew what it was save that a soul cast into it never was seen again in the Cycle. None understood it; therefore all feared it. Tasmari, sister of Bari, was queen over it.

Duval and I had nearly won through to the screen to rejoin our bodies, when it was discovered Paul had been freed from his isolation barrier. Instantly the thought forces of the Cycle were brought into play by Bari, drawing us hurtling back to the Cycle, to a mighty colonnaded temple. Here mighty Bari pronounced his decrees, surrounded in state by the members of his Thought Council, whose power through Bari enforced his commands.

We were tried, after a fashion, and because Paul had given control of his subjective will to the Cycle on entering, Bari had the power over him. I had not done so, and on my promise never to divulge the secrets of the Cycle, was given permission to return to my body. Duval was sentenced to the Vortex.

Bidden to see the end, I had watched Paul poised on the brink of the abyss which contained the Vortex.

It was then Margurite defied Bari and his Council. She interposed her will between Paul and Bari, though she knew it might mean her destruction.

She gave us time to enter the ray and fight our way into our bodies. We had seen Bari bend his awful

power on her, and had seen her stand fast. But, she could not but wilt under it. Indeed we knew she had been broken, for as we gained our bodies, we felt the pull of the Cycle on us—too late.

We could only hope an easy fate had been hers—and Duval was broken-hearted. He worked night and day to free her through the ray, but——

Thus matters stood at the time described at the opening of this narrative. I am giving the details as accurately as I may, not having been a witness to what happened. It was told me later by no less a person than Tasmari,—but that is another tale. Other incidents in what I am about to relate were also told to me by others, except the last act, in which I was one of the players.

MOMENT after moment passed after the white-robed figures appeared, and still the throne remained untenanted. Finally a shadow flitted across it and the vaguest suggestion of a form appeared there. It flickered out; rapidly grew in intensity once more, until—on the seat of majesty a male figure appeared.

Noble in his proportions; splendid in the anger which gathered on his brow; beautiful in the physical; he dominated the vast gathering with an impression of boundless power, of which he seemed to be the essence. And he was power, for Bari controlled the subjective wills of countless souls.

He held up his hand for silence. A sigh of expectancy swept through the assemblage, dying away as the audience leaned forward the better to hear.

Bari looked over the throng with a searching gaze.

"Where is Tasmari, my sister?" he asked. There was no response.

" 'Tis as I thought," he cried wrathfully at last, when no one answered. "Since Tasmari is not here, it is not difficult to say why. She fears to come. Her own guilt shall accuse her."

"Bari was long in appearing," said a figure on the foremost row.

"Yea! That I was. Tasmari tried to prevent the convening of the Council. Tried to prevent me, Bari, from appearing before you. Did you feel a counter-thought to my call?"

"Yes! yes!" came from many. "A thought which cried us away from the temple impinged on our wills, O mighty Bari."

"And I, to whom all by our system should yield obedience, found myself scarce able to reach the throne." He smiled coldly. "My sister's power grows apace." Then savagely, "She could not oppose me thus were all my Council loyal. But mark me, I shall root out every disloyal member."

A shudder of uneasiness swayed through the multitude.

"Come! Let us have it now. Shall Bari or Tasmari rule?"

"Bari! Bari!" came the answer, though faintly the outer tiers seemed to cry "Tasmari."

Bari smiled in triumph.

"I shall shortly put your loyalty to a test," he stated. "A situation has risen which may disrupt the Cycle and usher in the ancient chaos, when there was no head nor government to the Cycle, and soul met soul in strife. To take measures against this, I have summoned you."

Bari ceased speaking for a moment. As he did so a sort of haze seemed to gather about him and his head drooped. For a second only, however, and he began to speak again.

"You well know Paul Duval and Harry Chaptel who came to our Cycle, leaving living bodies behind them, have returned to those bodies, though I opposed them. You also know that Marguerite, who dared set her will against mine to give them time to escape, hangs a deadened soul

in an isolation barrier erected about her by our thought. But you do not know these two plan a return to our Cycle carrying with them the seeds of rebellion. You do not know this would never have been but for Tasmari."

Bari spat out the name as though hurling something venomous from his lips. Again as he stopped speaking the haze gathered about him, this time heavier, and did not entirely dissipate when he resumed speech.

"Tasmari knows I would bring a charge against her. Do you wonder she opposed this gathering?"

A tense silence fell on the host, broken at length by a voice which called, "In what has she erred?"

"She erred in bringing Chaptel to the Cycle."

"What error there?"

"She failed to require the usual control, and therefore failed in her duty. She also——"

"Is she to be charged without the chance to defend herself?" enquired one.

"She deserves no hear——"

Bari's voice was drowned by cries of "let her appear," "she is too high to be condemned like an ordinary soul—she is one of us."

Bari's face darkened in anger, but as the cries continued he motioned his arm in wrathful assent.

"You shall rue the day you crossed Bari," he shouted. "But now—— Tasmari! Tasmari! I, Bari, in my own right and in the name of the Council command you to appear. Let this thought seek you out wherever you may be; in the realm of the clean or in the place of the evil ones, yea, let it break down even your own powerful barrier of thought. Tasmari, you are commanded. Come!"

At the last word the haze dropped like a mantle about him. The figures on the seats swayed like reeds tossed by the blast of a hurricane. Only in the center and near the throne was there calm. On these seats the gathered souls were rigid in concentrated thought, their eyes boring into the now whirling mist on the platform.

In that mist two powerful wills struggled; thoughts strong as cosmic force lashed at each other, soundless and terrible in their strife. At times it seemed as though two figures, motionless as death, showed through it, then one, and sometimes the mist darkened like a lowering nimbus cloud. Only once was there a sound. From the haze came the clarion voice of Bari calling. "Souls of the Cycle, I command your minds to me!"

Instantly, among the seats, more and more souls sank into the dead calm of concentration. Faster and faster their numbers increased until all except the farthermost tiers were gazing stedfastly at the mist.

Suddenly it was over. The cloud lifted and Bari stood forth. With him was Tasmari, beaten but defiant.

"So Tasmari would take my place?" he muttered through clenched teeth. "You would add insubordination to your other failings? You forgot Bari controls the minds of the Cycle, my sister." To the concourse he shouted in a ringing voice, in which there was a hint of mockery, "Tasmari has come to defend herself!"

Something like a sob went through the concourse, except those who had first stood true to Bari. Then there was silence, with the eyes of all on Tasmari.

"We shall leave aside this attempt to overthrow your lawful ruler, for that is something which concerns us," this last significantly. "You were summoned to answer a more serious charge. Are you ready?"

"I am ready to meet any charge you may bring against me, my brother," she answered proudly. "What false accusation do you make now?"

"Nothing false. I charge you with the responsibility of the imminent invasion of our sacred Cycle, by forces from the Life Side, led by Paul Duval and Harry Chaptel."

"How am I responsible for that?"

Bari bent his eyes sternly on her.

"You brought Chaptel over here," he asserted.

"That does not make me responsible."

"No? Had he not come in, Duval would never have been freed from his isolation barrier. That is true, is it not?"

"Yes," she replied defiantly, "and had you not blundered in giving Marguerite the power of one of the Council, she could not have helped Chaptel, and all would be well."

"That could not be foreseen at the time the power was granted, and it does not mitigate your fault. The guilt is yours, Tasmari. You hated Marguerite, and you sought to embarrass her by bringing Harry Chaptel to this side, because you thought he also hated her. You were wrong. You exceeded your authority. Duval would still be in isolation had not Chaptel freed him. You admit that?"

"Yes," she conceded.

"No need to argue further. My charge is substantiated. With his release the danger commenced. The guilt is yours, and through you the evil which threatens us must be removed." His lips parted grimly. "If you know of no way, Bari will tell you."

"You are ever the fool, my brother," she stated simply. "With all you have said true," she went on, heeding not his angry glance, "we have nothing to fear. Do you not hold Marguerite?"

"What of that?"

"I *said* you were a fool. With her as hostage, do you think Harry and Paul will dare to move against us? Better isolation than the Vortex," she added with meaning.

"How do they know she is not in the Vortex, instead of isolation?"

"We can let them know through the instrument called the 'radio' by which Paul asked help of Harry. I have spoken through it, and know how."

Bari bent a grudging look of admiration on her.

"It may do. We shall see. Until we do you are not a free soul nor Queen of the Vortex, and besides, do not forget Bari demands satisfaction for what you tried to do to him."

"At your own time, my brother," she replied.

At the mention of Marguerite's name, a figure which had appeared quietly in the Temple came to the foot of the throne platform. He had waited in silence while Bari and Tasmari wrangled. As the latter turned haughtily, and half-triumphantly, away from Bari, her eyes fell on him. At the sight she started as though stung.

"What brings you here, Ratrim," she demanded quickly.

"Ill news for you and the Cycle, I fear," he answered. Tasmari's face, at these words, showed fear for the first time since she had appeared. Bari stepped forward, enquiry written on his face.

"Speak!" ordered Tasmari faintly.

"Who is this?" queried Bari.

"The guard over Marguerite's isolation," answered Ratrim for himself.

"What do you want?"

"I have a report to make."

"What is it?"

"As I watched at the barrier, a strange light seemed to play on it. The barrier began to disappear. I bent my will upon it, bidding it stay, still it melted. I called to the Council, but none answered. Then——"

"Then——?" exclaimed Bari and Tasmari together.

"Then it faded away and in an instant Marguerite had disappeared."

Bari turned slowly on Tasmari, who threw her arm before her face as though to shield her eyes from some horror.

"You see, my sister, what you now have to answer for," he muttered in a low tense voice. "While you would seize my power, Paul Duval, in some manner, broke Marguerite's barrier. It could be none other than he. Our guard's timely call which would have summoned us to his aid went unheeded because the Council poured their thought on me, to overcome your rebellion. Have you something to offer? Some scheme left in your fertile thoughts to regain the captive?"

She did not answer.

"Then it shall be my way. And you, Tasmari, one-time Queen of the Vortex, shall be the instrument to bring us victory."

"How may I do it?" fearsomely.

"This way," solemnly: "Duval has a friend, Carac. Carac is often with Duval and Harry, and they are about to let him know the results of their adventure here. He can approach them without suspicion. Now, if his body housed another soul—yours for instance, my sister—Carac might kill his friends, sending their souls into the Cycle, where Bari will deal with them this time."

"You mean—I must drive out his soul with myself? Taint my spirit body with the touch of flesh? That is too horrible."

"Either that or the Vortex for you," with grim finality. "Do you accept the task?"

Shaken to the depth of her spirit-soul, Tasmari hesitated. But fear of the unknown won over horror of the known.

"I accept," she agreed with a sigh.

2

The sick man stirred uneasily in a restless sleep. He had lain thus since early evening. At times he would spring bolt-upright in his bed, then sink back, muttering in his strange delirium. There had been intervals when the combined efforts of both nurse and physician had hardly sufficed to prevent him from leaping into the room.

The disease which was tearing the life from Carac, the great physicist, was not ordinary. Fever, which usually accompanies delirium, was not present. The face was not flushed, the breathing not unusual. The only symptom of sickness could be found in the beating of his heart, which alternately raced like an overspeeded motor and slowed to where the stethoscope could scarcely detect its feeble pulsations.

Clearly, the cardio-vascular specialist in charge of the case was baffled. The usual restoratives and stimulants seemed to have virtually no effect. The periods when the heart beat wildly were becoming fewer, those when the beats faded away, more prolonged. With the gaining of the slow over the fast, the periods of Carac's wild delirium, or terror, became more frequent, though weaker.

"If this keeps up much longer we'll have a dead man on our hands before morning," remarked the specialist, finally.

The nurse was silent. She knew that if anyone on earth could save Carac, it was the man who was attending him.

They continued watching their patient in silence. Outside, a clock in a steeple, which struck the quarter-hours, sent its silvery message to the sleeping city.

"Half past 3," muttered the doctor to himself.

The silent watch continued. The nurse busied herself about the room,

once in a while stopping to ease the invalid's position on his pillow, or busying herself with a hypodermic on the table by the bed. Outside, a dog set up a doleful howling. This continued for a time, then a window slammed open, there was a thud and a tinkle of glass breaking and the howling ceased.

The clock struck again.

"Quarter of 4," said the doctor.

The nurse came up behind him and laid her hand softly on his shoulder. As he turned his face up to her, she motioned him to silence. With her eyes she cautiously indicated the figure on the bed.

The doctor carefully turned and could scarcely restrain a start of surprize. Carac was stealthily watching him out of half-narrowed eyes. It was not this alone which had made the doctor start, however. As his eyes had met those of the patient, he had a momentary glimpse into the soul of the inferno. In those eyes were, strangely, horror and hate triumphant.

The expression passed in a moment. A little sheepishly the doctor leaned forward and gently patted Carac on the shoulder.

"Better, old man?" But Carac closed his eyes and the muttering began once more.

The doctor turned to find the nurse looking at him questioningly. He shook his head and they took up their vigil once more; this time a bit more on the alert. Somehow, both felt a new tension had entered in; a prescience of something to occur.

The clock was striking again.

One—two—three—four.

"Four o——" began the doctor, but his sentence was never finished. With a soul-paralyzing screech, Carac had launched himself from his bed. The doctor and the nurse darted toward him, but he shook the former off and dealt the woman a blow which sent her reeling, half-stunned, across the room.

With a curse the doctor again threw himself toward Carac,—then stopped in mid-rush. The sick man was standing at his full height, not violent now; head thrown back, every lineament of his face expressing untold agony and stark fear. Cry after cry burst from his twisted lips.

"You can't! you can't! you can't!" he screamed. His face became black and the sound came in half-strangled syllables from his throat.

Suddenly he wilted.

"All right! I'll go," he sobbed, and plunged face downward to the floor.

The doctor leaped to his side and turned him over on his back. The man slowly opened his eyes. They held the light of sanity, but glowed with a strange light, an inhuman quality.

"All right now, old man?" asked the specialist.

"Yes," huskily, and Carac closed his eyes and seemed to sleep. But in those eyes the doctor had half-sensed a subtle difference,—as though a new personality had entered, utterly unlike Carac.

3

It was a terrible night of storm. A night of moon and rain with the wind driving the harrassed clouds scurrying before it. Lightning flashed, jagged forks of it across the sky, and the thunder's answering growl had in it the quality of sound which made it seem a personal thing, a thing of menace.

With but one light turned on, Duval and I sat smoking silently, each busied with his own thoughts. The silence within was enhanced by the din without. Though it was warm in the room, I shivered slightly and noticed that Duval, one hand in his pocket, was slouched down in the up-

holstery of his chair, as though he, too, felt the dankness.

My revery was broken with a start. A low noise, like the beat of powerful wings, and a white ghost sailed into the study from the room beyond. I jumped half out of my chair, then sank back with a foolish half-laugh as I realized what had occasioned the disturbance.

A great white owl had flitted through the room and was now perched on the arm of Duval's chair. Duval always did the unusual, but one seldom chooses a fierce bird of prey as a household pet.

When I had surprized Duval a few nights back carrying the inert bird from in front of the ray machine, I had merely thought him engaged in some experiment. Since coming back from the Second Cycle, where the ray had sped us, he had occasionally used the machine, and against my protest. I did not like the idea of his opening the door to the Other Side. I could remember Tasmari's last words too plainly: "You win this time, but at the last you must return." I knew the returning would cause us some worry, and I was not eager to have it happen until we were prepared to defend ourselves.

Duval had tamed this owl to a certainty. After a moment's rest on the chair arm, it snuggled up to him and placed its head on his shoulder. He began to stroke the feathers under its throat, talking to it the while in a crooning voice.

The bird acted so humanly that I laughed, and then more loudly. It was too ludicrous to see the staid Duval and the sedate bird acting like two in love. At my laugh Duval drew his hand away for all the world like a little boy caught stealing jam, and the bird took its head from off his shoulder with a shy prettiness, laughably like a young girl caught in the act of caressing her sweetheart.

"What's so funny?" growled Duval.

"You and that bird," I replied. "Like two sweethearts."

Duval looked at me quizzically, but merely grunted in answer. I am not slow in putting two and two together and his expression should have told me something. It didn't—until later.

No more was said, for it was then that Carac came. He stood suddenly framed in the doorway. Whether he had just walked in, or had been admitted by Duval's man, we did not know. But there he was.

Coinciding exactly with his appearance, a black cloud shaped strangely like a man in flowing robes flung itself over the face of the moon, which, up to now, in spite of the storm, had miraculously kept her countenance clear. The room grew darker, and from that moment until Carac's mission was finished, I felt the presence of something malignant in the room.

Only that day, we had heard Carac was desperately ill, so we were naturally surprized to see him up and about, especially in a night like the present. A fine fellow, Carac, and one of our best friends.

"Well, come in, old man," called Duval, who was the first to recover from his surprize. "Thought you were on your back."

Carac came forward, somewhat uncertainly, and took Duval's outstretched hand. I extended mine. As I caught his fingers they were cold and clammy, like a dead man's, or a dead fish. His face, too, was colorless with the pallor of death. I let go his hand, which fell numbly to his side as though the effort of shaking hands had completely exhausted him.

Without a word, he walked gropingly toward a chair, stumbled over a rug and would have fallen, had not Paul caught him by the arm.

"By Jove! Carac! You *are* weak.

Why did you want to come out on a night like this?"

"Wanted to talk with you." These, the first words he had uttered, were thick, as though he had not the full control of the functions of his tongue.

"Couldn't wait, eh?" smiled Duval.

"Yes—er—no. Couldn't wait," he repeated, parrot-fashion.

"What is it about?" I asked.

He did not answer, but turned his eyes full into mine. I tried to meet his gaze, but somehow couldn't. There was a remarkable brilliancy, and a sort of stare in those eyes; behind that something else—something—something—I can not explain what it was save that it made me shiver to look at them.

When I looked down he turned his face to Duval, who returned the stare for a moment, but also looked away, laughing a little uneasily as he did so.

The silence was becoming embarrassing. Paul, who was not seated, took a cigar from the humidor, and bit off the end with a savage little twist. He struck a match and touched it to the end of his smoke.

Carac also helped himself to a cigar. Odd that I should have noticed it so clearly at the time, but Carac had never (and I knew him well) smoked cigars, preferring the cigarette. He, too, struck a match, carrying it shakily toward his face. It went out before a light could be secured, and he let the charred stick fall to his feet.

Duval absent-mindedly stooped to pick it up. In doing so, he half bent one knee, which kept his body nearly erect. His neck came on the level with Carac's hands.

From weakly hanging fingers, these were suddenly transformed into clutching talons. Carac's whole body tensed to spring, as those hands seemed to dart for Duval's throat.

With a startled exclamation, Duval eluded them by falling backward. I jumped to my feet, but Carac had sunk back into his chair, an apologetic, if sickly grin on his face.

Duval said nothing, but a thoughtful expression came into his face. Walking over to me he whispered, "I think he's delirious. Probably escaped from his nurses. I am going to call his home."

He was half-way across the room when Carac called.

"Don't go out. I feel better now, and I have something to tell you. Don't feel so strong and want to get back to bed." Duval hesitated but returned.

"I had a dream," he began. "In it I saw you and Chaptel here. I saw you in front of a machine of some kind which was projecting a powerful beam of strangely colored light. I saw your bodies fall to the floor of the room you were in, and your souls leaped free from their bondage of flesh."

Duval and I turned startled faces to each other. A dream? Except that we had not entered the Cycle together it was a fact. Carac continued as though not noticing our actions.

"Next, I saw you in a place strange to you. You were separated. Paul was enclosed in a strange-appearing substance, motionless. Harry was standing near. With him a woman. She was talking to him. Presently he fixes his eyes upon Paul. They become staring and concentrated. He slowly approaches you. You lift your hand. It drops by your side again. Harry is entering your prison. Then the woman fixes her eyes on you, Harry. In a moment you are both free and the woman has gone."

We were amazed. The man was recalling exactly the incident where I freed Paul from his isolation barrier while we were in the Second Cycle.

How could anyone on this side know of that? We had told no one. I looked questioningly at Paul, and saw a light of half-understanding in his face.

Carac continued: "Then I saw a mighty temple——"

"Stop," shouted Paul. "Do you mean to tell me you dreamed that?"

A peculiar smile twisted Carac's features, and he answered evasively, "That is not all the dream. There is more. When I next saw you——"

"That's enough, Carac," said Duval. "Harry and I know the rest. You could not know it unless——unless——"

Carac rose to his feet. "Just a dream," he smoothly interrupted.

Then his manner changed. It became more hard, less the attitude of a sick man.

"A few days ago you started an experiment to discover if, indeed, the soul did exist after death. I warn you to stop. To forget all you know about it, and to tell no one of what you learned. In this way only can you earn safety."

"*A few days ago!*" we cried in unison. Carac looked at us sharply, but did not reply.

"Why, that was five years ago," came from Duval.

Carac ran his hand over his face as though brushing something from his eyes. "Ah! I had forgotten Time exists here," he breathed in a voice so low I could not be sure what he said. Then aloud in stern demand, "Nonetheless, I command you to stop, in the name of——"

His voice died out in the middle of his sentence.

The white owl, which had sat as motionless as though stuffed in one corner of the room, had hooted dismally, and half flying, half hopping, came to rest beside Duval.

Carac had at first been startled, and now appeared half angry, as he saw what had made the noise. Suddenly a new expression came over his face, one of surprize, changing to understanding.

He glanced sardonically at Duval, then crouched and slowly, like a panther stalking its prey, crept toward the bird.

Duval and I, too astounded at the suddenness and unreality of it all for words, watched him, fascinated. The bird, as Carac approached, edged away from him, fear in its eyes, human fear. Merciful heavens! The eyes were those of a frightened girl!

Just in time Duval struck aside the arm which was shooting cobra-like at the owl. Instantly, Carac turned on him.

"Where did you get—that?" he asked in a tense voice.

"I——"

"No need to tell me, Duval—I know." He swayed toward Paul, deadly menace in every movement. But Duval did not stir. He was looking at Carac's face, which seemed subtly changed. It was the same face, yet somehow different. The eyes!—the eyes!—"windows of the soul" in truth.

"My God!" gasped Paul. "And I—know—you—Tasmari!"

Carac halted an instant, body tensed.

Now the explanation of things flashed upon me. Carac's uncertainty of motion because Tasmari could not control the muscles perfectly. Cigars instead of cigarettes because Tasmari did not know what Carac smoked. "A few days ago" instead of five years because Time did not exist in the Cycle and Tasmari would naturally not measure it on the Life Side. No wonder the face had suddenly became familiar to me—it was Tasmari looking out at us through Carac's eyes. Tasmari had driven out Carac's soul.

At the word "Tasmari" the tumult of the storm increased tenfold. There came a flash of lightning,

brilliant as a burning world—elemental sound engulfed us, and the lights in the room flickered and went out. I saw Carac leap.

Then faintly above the roar which the concussion left pounding at my ear-drums, came the sound of struggling beings, the stamp of feet and the impact of blows.

A moment later I had located the sound, and knew its cause. Tasmari, in the body of Carac, was attacking Duval. I leaped in and a flying fist caught me behind the ear with a force which stunned.

Duval's voice!

"Harry! quick, she's got a knife." Then came a moan of pain and an exultant cry from Carac. I groped my way to them again, fearful lest in the dark I should aid Duval's foe by mistake. I never reached my goal.

A light breeze fanned my face and something touched my cheek. There came a beating of wings and a scream of rage from Carac, which trailed off into a gurgling, sickening gargle. I heard the faint impact of a blow and a cry from the bird. A continued threshing of wings. Silence.

The lights came on. The circuit breaker which had been thrown by the bolt of lightning had been closed again. My eyes were met by a gruesome sight.

Duval was holding his shoulder, from which the blood oozed. Lying supine, head thrown back, was Carac, hate and life fading from his eyes. Fastened to his throat was the white owl, which had struck unerringly in the dark, when neither I nor Duval could see our foe.

Her wings were moving feebly, while in her white breast was a knife, to the hilt, around which was a slowly spreading stain.

Duval's eyes fell upon the bird. Still sunk in the ghastly wounds they had torn were its talons, but the white owl was dying. Paul crept over to the bird, gently took its claws from their reddened bed, and softly held it in his arms. There were tears in his eyes.

"Marguerite! Marguerite! Faithful unto death! Always my dear love!"

Then I knew what I might have guessed. Duval had given Marguerite an earthly shelter from Tasmari's wrath,—the body of a white owl!

At his words the bird raised its head and placed it on Duval's shoulder. For an instant it held on. Then fell back.

"Dead," sighed Duval. "Dead, and God protect her from those fiends in whose hands she has gone."

A choking sound from Carac. The lips were moving. I bent my head over them and caught these words: "Tasmari scores this time."

The eyes closed. At the same time the clouds were erased from the face of the moon, which once more flooded the room with its light.

Note.—The previous adventures of Duval were narrated in "Duval's Weird Experiment" and "Queen of the Vortex," in the April and May numbers of WEIRD TALES.

The BEAST

by

PAUL BENTON

"As he lashed, the thing groveled at his feet, howling horribly, and turning up to him a face from which all semblance of humanity had fled."

HOW shall I put down my story, so weird and unbelievable, on paper that it may convince any who reads it, should it ever be read? Even as I consider it calmly, freeing my mind from the sudden chill dread that seizes me as I think of that terrible and curious moment, it seems a wild figment of the imagination, a strange optical illusion for which tired nerves and lack of sleep are responsible. And then as I get it figured out in this conventional fashion its utter reality suddenly grips me again, and down falls my fine fabric of logic. Of course, I should know that such a thing can not be, is impossible. In reply I can only set down helplessly but obstinately, that it is. As for the scientific side of the question I know nothing and frankly care nothing. Again I can only repeat that I saw it.

Sometimes when I think of that man walking the streets, mingling with human beings, speaking, being spoken to—I could rush to the window and scream a warning into the night.

I care not whether these pages be read. I may destroy them myself if I am not myself destroyed. For the moment it suffices that I must have some confidant in the matter, even if it be only a sheet of paper. It may seem a strange proceeding, but then all my actions have been strange of late—for two days—yes, two days, although it seems as though two centuries could scarcely have passed more slowly. Only the night before last? Correct, according to my cal-

endar. But then I have not slept, which makes a difference.

When did I first meet Walter Strong? It must have been two, no, three years ago. He was then what, God help us both, he is today. A careful, courteous gentleman, polished, cultured, engaging in manner, with a nice perception in all those minor delicacies of human intercourse which are the savor of life. One could no more imagine his doing an inconsiderate or thoughtless act than—I know not what. He was—I use the past tense advisedly—one of those rare beings to whom ugliness in any form brings a pain almost physical.

I came to know him well. We were intimates, our tastes and feelings inclining us to the same things. He was frequently at my house; I often visited him in his place in Madison Avenue, half studio, half apartment. He painted casually but well, an excellent amateur. He turned up in New York from London, I believe, with good letters of introduction. He claimed to be English, and quite possibly he is. His was the casual claim of a casual man.

Although Mrs. Lukyns' dinner was but forty-eight hours ago I can not recall any marked characteristic of the meal. It was good, I suppose, and the usual run of artistic and near-artistic folk were there who always come to Mrs. Lukyns' dinners. The thing happened after dinner, and here I had best pause a moment to arrange every incident methodically in my mind.

First Strong was talking to our hostess. I stood with them for a moment and the talk was of some new book, I forget which one. Then Strong moved away and sat down by Betty Ives in one of those S-shaped chairs. I was left alone as Mrs. Lukyns strolled away with Wildrow, the new professor. I walked over to the fireplace and stood facing the room, and owing to the position of his chair I could see Strong clearly. The light on his face was excellent, as he was seated within the radius of a big lamp on the center table.

I was standing there, smoking and wondering idly what a man like Strong could find to talk to Betty Ives about. My temperature was normal. I was feeling slightly fatigued but otherwise in excellent condition. There was absolutely nothing abnormal in the surroundings or in myself, physically or mentally.

Then——

As God is my witness, I saw the soul of Walter Strong. And the horror of it was and is that it was not the soul of a man; not that of a human being. It was that of a wild beast.

I do not have to shut my eyes to visualize it now. The man's body had faded into a faint but perfectly distinct outline. And within it was something which appeared to be a sort of panther. Written down, this appears to be absurd, sounds like sheer raving, yet I am telling what I saw and nothing more. The face was a mask of horror, a grinning, hateful thing.

For a moment—it must have been but a moment, since evidently no one noticed anything strange in my behavior—I stood staring. Then with an effort which took every ounce of physical strength I looked away.

When my eyes in a few seconds turned back instinctively to where Strong was seated there was nothing unusual about his appearance at first, but when our eyes crossed, he was staring fixedly at me. There came into his face, hitherto so invariably calm, gentle, almost too expressionless, a look of the most ghastly malignancy I have ever seen a human countenance express. It can not be described accurately, nor are there words to do credit to the hate, fear

and bitterness in the man's face. It was the soul speaking. We were challenging each other across a great chasm, the chasm of our surroundings. Had we been alone I have no doubt he would have sprung at my throat. All the beast within him was clamoring for an outlet.

I looked away again, almost physically sick this time. Lukyns was the first to notice my condition.

"How pale you are; are you ill?" he asked in a low voice, coming up to where I stood.

"No," I replied, and my voice sounded strange and hoarse as though forced by my will through a great empty distance. I told him, heaven knows what conventional lie. I only remember I fairly fled, but quietly enough.

How long I wandered aimlessly through the streets I have no idea. I remember dismissing the cab which Lukyns had called, as soon as we had turned the corner. Then I walked rapidly ahead, striving to settle my problem.

For indeed a very real and terrible problem confronts me which I have so far been unable to solve. What am I to do about Strong? It is unbearable that he should continue to live free and unhampered, unsuspected, unwatched, until the thing culminates in some frightful tragedy. Looking at the question coldly, I suppose he should be confined somewhere. Scientists should be able to observe him, make daily notes, psychological tests, and try to solve this strange problem of identity. But of course that is impossible, quite impossible.

I am bound hand and foot by the incredulity of humanity. I should be marked down as a lunatic. I should be lucky to escape the asylum. I wrestle through the long hours with the problem and find no solution. I can write no more now, but must drive my tired brain afresh.

JUNE 3, 1911. I am leaving tomorrow and have come to two definite conclusions which I am convinced, despite their contradictory nature, are true. Strong is afraid of me, and I am afraid of Strong.

The second I know to be correct. I have felt fear before, but that which I felt when I saw Strong's beastlike glare fixed on me that night was the cause of my physical repugnance primarily. It was a fear so great that I did not recognize it as fear at first—not indeed until, seated in my library with doors and windows locked, I seemed to see those malevolent eyes fixed on me from a dark corner. Since that moment it has never left me. Sleeping, I dream of it, and awake to find the sweat running down my face, my lips rough and dry, and my limbs twitching as though in an ague. Waking, I see constantly before me the man's face as it appeared to me at that moment.

As for my first conclusion, I am driven to it. In this morning's paper I read that Walter Strong, "the society painter," sailed at 11 o'clock last night on the *Lusitania*. The reporter declared Mr. Strong was going to Paris to study "the new art of Picabia." Fool! He is going because in his beast soul he fears me. I am a man and his master! He fears to meet me. But I shall give him no rest. We are pitted against each other by fate, the primeval foes of the world—Man and Beast. Fear him? Yes, I do. But he fears me more and can not conquer his fear because he can not conquer his soul. I am sailing on the French line for Havre tomorrow.

June 6, 1911. On Board S. S. La Touraine. At Sea. This brisk air is doing me good. Then, too, as the days pass I am feeling stronger in my conviction of his fear. And while I can not account for it now, there must be some subtle, deep-rooted reason for it. Evidently he

had no idea of the strength of his position but fled in panic, trusting that I might be content to let things drift along casually as long as he kept out of the way. But I am not doing so. I can not quite analyze the feeling that pervades me these days. I think of little, I dream of little, save this pursuit which is beginning. I feel, despite what has happened to throw my normal, easy-going life, with its daily work and recreation, out of gear, a strange lightness of spirit, a certain almost fierce exultation, when I think of my quarry, for as such I now regard Strong. Sometimes I walk the boat deck at night wondering whether he is walking the deck of the *Lusitania*, out there somewhere ahead of us, churning him toward England, France, what? I wonder what his thoughts are. Does he sometimes, when the deck is vacant, astonish some amazed sailor by raising his head and snarling beastlike at the moon? Does it seem a relief to him when alone in his cabin to take out the pent-up emotions of a day of civilized repression by hurling himself upon the pillows in his berth, worrying them with frantic teeth, eager for the taste of blood?

Or perhaps he does not dare relax for a moment from that iron self-control which has carried him through so many years of civilized intercourse, his secret undiscovered.

It is all a speculation to me, fascinating in interest, which daily loses more and more of its horror.

There is a famous man on board, Emile Le Saunier, the psychologist. He is most approachable for a scientist, and as he sits at my table we have struck up a walking and talking acquaintance which bids fair to become more. I welcome it as it gives me healthful recreation from my own thoughts. I was interested in getting his impression of some aspects of my case, and today as we were doing our constitutional I asked him how he thought a sudden and terrible revelation might affect such a man as myself. He replied, "You have been a man of action?"

"Yes," I answered, "to some extent. I have lived in the wilds where one's existence hinges upon one's ability to withstand nature."

He considered the problem for some minutes, now and then glancing at me as we strode along the deck, quick glances from iron-gray eyes under bushy brows. At length he said slowly, "Very interesting. A sudden and terrible revelation, eh? *Mon ami*, I think you would go back, revert—you understand me?"

"Atavism?" I asked.

"Hm—well, yes. You are the strong type; the physical lies near the surface in you. The repression of civilization we may all drop like—like some big snake dropping his old skin. But some of us drop it sooner than others. Of that type, I think you, Monsieur Hadley. My opinion, knowing you so slightly, may be hasty. If you think me wrong, you will pardon me, I trust. I am but answering your question."

Later, at dinner, he presented me to his daughter, a charming slip of a girl about seventeen, I should judge, of exquisite but undeveloped beauty.

At Sea, June 11, 1911. We shall land in a few hours and I shall go to Paris at once. Somehow I feel sure that I'll find my man without much difficulty. There is no reason for this, but I have given up reason as a guide and shall follow instinct blindly. After all, what has poor old sober reason to do with a wild affair like this? If I had listened to reason, I should have stayed quietly at home. I was standing up in the bow this morning, immersed in my thoughts, gazing at but hardly seeing the frantic bobbing of a little trawler in the choppy channel sea, when I became aware that someone was speaking to

me. I turned and found Cecile Le Saunier standing at my elbow. She made a lovely picture with her golden curls tossing and her eyes sparkling like the foam-crested waves. I stammered an awkward enough "good morning," for indeed I must have looked strange glaring out across the waters with unseeing eyes.

"Oh, Monsieur Hadley, did I disturb you?"

"No, indeed, nor would I have objected."

"The water and the sky seem particularly beautiful this morning, do they not, *Monsieur?*" she went on in quaint precise English. "But then probably I feel that way because I'm to see France again in another half-hour. Papa says we should be within sight of the coast then. Won't that be glorious?" She laughed and clapped her hands.

Somehow the vision of her has haunted me all day. Perhaps more than I care to admit. She is a charming child, astonishingly mature along certain lines, yet as fresh and unspoiled as the clean sea wind; young but already fascinating and giving the promise of a rare and wonderful womanhood. Before we landed, Le Saunier asked me to visit them at Les Roches, their place in Normandy. Pretty name. I don't know whether I shall go.

Paris, June 18, 1911. Damnation! I have been here a week and discovered nothing. Not a clue, not a trace. Strong is well known here. I have unearthed a dozen acquaintances. But none of them has seen him for several years. However, I shall stay here. My hunter's instinct, if I can call it that, tells me that this is the place to be.

PARIS, June 21, 1911. Something terrible has happened. This can't go on. I'm all right again now, and looking back I wonder at moments whether it is not imagination—no, damn it! That theory won't hold water. If I am to beat this malignant thing that has come into my life, I've got to be frank with myself first of all. Last night I was tired, too tired to go out for my dinner, and ordered a cutlet and a bottle of wine in my room. I was reading, with the book propped up against the sugar bowl, the cutlet brown and appetizing on the plate in front of me. Suddenly the most violent desire I ever experienced—and I have experienced the normal number of passions—swept over me with a force I can only describe as sickening. I wanted, longed, ached, to snatch up that meat tear it with my teeth, worry it, suck out its juices. I came near doing it, too. My head went down toward the plate as though someone had pushed it violently; my hands clenched like claws, the fingers clutching.

With a supreme effort of the will, I raised my head and caught sight of my face in the big mirror on the other side of the room. It was a perfect mask of bestiality. My groping hand came in contact with the wine glass which I had just filled, and with a sudden impulse of sanity I raised the glass and flung the wine in my face.

The shock brought me to my senses. Just as soon as I could change my soaked shirt and coat I fled from the room, took a taxicab and passed the rest of the evening on the *terrasse* of the Café de la Paix. Then went home and slept normally.

Now, what in God's name can a man make out of a thing like that?

Paris, June 23, 1911. Things are approaching a climax. I believe I am in the most frightful danger, yet the fear this arouses in me only strengthens my determination to find Strong—find and kill him. . . . Therein, as I reason it, lies my one chance of salvation.

I stumbled on the explanation quite by accident. I ran across Brownson in the Tuileries. He has

been here for years enjoying himself and painting. He asked me to dinner and the explanation came from him, quite unconsciously, while we were eating.

"Do you remember, or did you ever know Donaldson?" he asked.

I replied I had never heard of him.

"Well, he lived here, in the Rue Bellechasse, with a charming chap, English I think, Strong his name was —Walter Strong."

He sipped his coffee and lighted his cigar with maddening deliberation, moving the match from side to side, until it burned exactly even. I controlled my face and patience with an effort.

"Yes," I said finally, "go on."

"No haste, no haste. Story'll keep. Never hurry a good cigar. Well, where was I? Oh, yes, this chap Strong. One morning after the two, who were great friends, had been living together for about a year, Strong came home early, found Donaldson reading, rather irritable at being disturbed, and went to bed. Later, he told the police, he was awakened by someone moving in the next room, the living room of the flat. Said it sounded as though the fellow was on his hands and knees, and then a moment later he heard someone sniffing, like an animal, you know, at the keyhole. Then, according to his story, he got up, switched on the light and found young Donaldson crouching on the hearth rug on all fours, snarling at him—stark, staring mad, you know. They took him to Charenton. He's there yet, I guess. A perfectly hellish thing. He's never spoken a word or shown a human trait since that night. He's simply a beast."

For a moment an agony of terror fell upon me, similar to that I experienced when Strong was revealed to me in New York, but so infinitely greater that I shall not attempt to describe it accurately. It must have affected my appearance, as Brownson looked across the table with a frightened expression.

"Good Lord, man," he said, "are you ill?"

"No," I lied, swallowing my liqueur at a gulp; "but that yarn of yours—it's too damned horrible!"

So I must, must, must—God! I've got to find Strong and kill him. I've been warned. I'll not succumb like a weakling. The law holds as innocent men who kill to save their lives. But I am fighting for far more than life.

PARIS, July 1, 1913. If an irreligious man with death in his heart can thank his Maker sincerely, I should do so. Here I am back in Paris, more than two years after this long and bitter chase, a hunt never before, I believe, duplicated in history. I am alive, sick in body and soul after passing through experiences I firmly believe no man before me ever has undergone.

I suppose Strong thinks me dead, as well he might after the last glimpse he caught of me, floating helpless in the current of the Zambesi. And incidentally the upsetting of my canoe which saved him is the cause of my setting down these past experiences now, since I lost the note-books containing the full account of my wanderings. My first book, left at the Crédit Lyonnais here when I followed Strong from Russia to Manchuria, tells the story, I perceive, of my early fears and hates and hopes, bringing it up to the time I discovered Strong could influence me mentally, even from a great distance.

Taking up the thread, it is sufficient to say I got trace of him in Berlin and followed his trail on the next train, only to miss my man by a matter of hours. For a time, the scent was lost. Finally, I heard of him in Vienna and chased him from there through Poland, Russia, and, in the

midst of a frozen Balkan winter, nearly ran him to earth in Sofia. But some malign influence seemed to be operating against me. My train was delayed and I caught a glimpse of him on a train bound for Russia, as my own rolled into the Sofia station. Then, afterward, in the station restaurant, I had another attack. I clung to the table and swayed in my chair, then mercifully fainted. Mental overstimulus, the doctor called it.

Through Russia, I followed into Siberia and Manchuria, and finally to China. Early this year, he fled to Africa. As usual, it was a touch-and-go affair. His steamer sailed from Bombay at 9 in the morning, and my train from the north got in at 10. He had two weeks start.

I lost the trail, following to Cape Town, to find he had left the steamer at Zanzibar. I followed and was told he had struck into the interior. I followed, making the long trek to the top of Tanganyika. Down the mighty lake, I followed. I felt that surely we should meet in this great unknown and fight out our primitive battle here in the wilderness. He struck the Zambesi and went upstream, heading for the West Coast. I followed, mad with exultation.

Scarcely sleeping, traveling as never African traveler went before, I pushed on. My men fell exhausted. I hired new bearers—we lost the trail—I raged like a madman, sleepless and tireless for two days, until we were on the spoor of his safari again.

Finally, we headed him off. Mohammed Abdul, good old villain, and myself, left our men, got ahead of him, and struck the river. We got a canoe, left what little remained of our outfit and drove down-stream. We were not far above the mighty cataract, Victoria, when we sighted his canoes coming up. Then he turned, and fled down-stream. He had six paddles going to our two; fear moved his as hate did mine. We gained as he sheered toward the south bank to avoid the death pull of the current.

Then, even as I was sighting my rifle, came the accident. A log crashed into us, driven by the full force of the stream. It smashed our frail dugout like a shell.

Mohammed, whom I picked up starving in Peshawur, saved my life that day. Not only on that day, but on many another, during the long journey south to civilization.

Yes, Strong must think me dead. Few men escape the current of the Zambesi above Victoria.

So, here I am again, my strength gone, my hope nearly so. Thank God! I have had no attack of animalism; it might succeed, I fear. I have been too long alone, removed from my kind. I need something—I can't say exactly what. I must get rest.

Paris, July 4, 1913. The problem is solved. Today, sunning myself on the *terrasse* of a café in the Boulevard des Italiens, I met Dr. Le Saunier, as hale and hearty, and delicately kind, as I knew him on the *Touraine,* two years ago. Nothing would do but that I must tell him where I got the tan that even the African fever pallor can not wear away. I told him I had been hunting in Africa, and of my sickness. Well, then, I must come down to Normandy to Les Roches; eat apples; listen to Cecile play on the harp; read; loaf; enjoy myself. I accepted, and am to motor down with him in the morning. But I must not neglect my quest. Last night, I had a slight attack. I called Mohammed, who placed his hands on my shoulders, called me Bahadur, and bade me remember that I was a man. He is a great help to me. I have long since told him all my story. Orientals can understand such things. I believe he regards Strong as an evil spirit, with some sort of magical powers. A sort of demon.

Château des Roches. July 5, 1913. We came down from Paris this morn-

ing. It was a beautiful trip. This countryside is charming, and to me, fresh from the horrors of that terrible journeying in Africa, doubly so. The old château, a long, low building, modern but built around the shell of an old Norman fortress, is delightful. Cecile Le Saunier was at the door to meet us. Her father had wired ahead. It seems impossible that two years could have done as much for anyone. I can't quite describe her. She is like a flame. Between lunch and dinner she showed a dozen different moods and phases, all delightful.

After dinner, we gathered in the salon, the doctor, Cecile, and myself, and I was called upon for an account of my African wanderings, obliged to account for Mohammed, and a dozen other things, and before we knew it, midnight was well past. It was good, good, to be able to sit in a civilized room talking to my own sort of people again after so long. I even forgot Strong, and as I write this and pause for a moment to look out into the cool, dark night, through the long window, my pursuit and the events leading up to it seem strangely unreal.

But I can not forget the poor lad in Charenton asylum—the boy who howls nightly at the moon from behind his barred windows.

Château des Roches, July 6, 1913. Cecile and I walked to Verneuil, the near-by town, this morning. She wished me to see the historic old place. We walked around the grass-grown, moss-covered battlements and she told me of the battle fought here in the Hundred Years War.

Les Roches, July 14, 1913. It has been a great day for Cecile. We have had a *celebration civique.* There have been speeches in the town by various dignitaries, official and other, including Dr. Le Saunier. Then, they all came to lunch at Les Roches. The men, old and young, rave about Cecile, and the younger ones are worried by my presence at the château. Indeed, in the rare moments when I permit myself to think of the future instead of merely taking what the present has to offer, I am worried myself. I wish I could go to Le Saunier with the problem. However, he might be excused for thinking me a lunatic. He is working tremendously just now on a new book. Today, he told me the researches for it had been going on for more than fifteen years. It is something about the psychology of the abnormal. I would be an interesting specimen for him.

Les Roches, July 17, 1913. Rather disjointed affair, this journal of mine, but I have never, since the beginning, put anything in it unless something had happened worth putting in. The question before me now is whether to drop my quest and risk any possible consequences or leave Les Roches. I love Cecile. I dare no longer disguise this to myself by calling it dallying or resting. I have been staying on here for two weeks now simply because I love her and have loved her from the first. Can I remain longer without letting her know it? And can I let her know it? No! A hundred times, no! A menace hangs over me day and night, and God alone knows what the final result will be. In the meantime, until I have freed myself of Walter Strong, I am not my own master but the slave of forces of which I am ignorant. I have made my decision. I shall go tomorrow. I feel ill tonight. For two days my African malaria has been getting worse. These tropical troubles are hard to shake off. But I shall go to Paris tomorrow, and resume the trail, hurry the pursuit, rush it with all the old fervor, and then hurry back. Cecile, I know, will wait.

Les Roches, July 18, 1913. Just a few lines before I slip this into my bag. My hand is trembling and I feel worse than since I won to Cape

Town. I saw Cecile this morning after breakfast and told her I must leave for Paris today. She started and paled, and—curse me for a fool! —I had her in my arms, choking and crying and whispering things I had no right to say. I am wildly, feverishly glad, yet hate myself for a cowardly scoundrel.

She asked suddenly, "But, *chéri*, why are you going, since you love me?"

It was a terrible moment. Every instinct, every nerve, prompted me to stay. Finally, I managed to say, "Sweetheart"—Lord, but it was good to call her by that good old English name!—"I have work to do and for the present it must be secret, even from you. See, I am frank. I must do it, and have delayed too long already, dearest. I can not tell you what it is, but will when it is finished. Can you trust me, be silent about our love until you hear from me? Can you, dearest?"

She suddenly caught me by the shoulders, swung me around facing her with a force I did not think she possessed, and looked long into my face. Her eyes were full, first of a great questioning which gradually turned to such love and trust that my heart pounded madly. She answered simply, "*Bien*. Kiss me, and go."

To kiss and to leave! She is wonderful, inspiring in her passion of fearless love and trust.

LES ROCHES, July 25, 1913. I hardly know how to tell what has happened. Strong is here at Les Roches, and I am here, and Cecile, all the dramatis personæ of my tragedy. I have been ill. In fact, this is my first day out of bed, and the first chance I have had to put anything down in my journal. The other morning as I was preparing to leave, I was knocked out by my old African fever and until yesterday was in a state half-way between consciousness and oblivion. It appears from what Cecile tells me that Strong came here the day I was taken ill. In the mere fact of his staying after he found I was in the house, I read a menace. The man, or beast, or whatever he is, must be as tired as I of this everlasting chase and resolved to bring it to an end. He probably counts on my physical weakness as an aid in overcoming my soul. I haven't seen him yet, but have no doubt that Cecile is the attraction which brought him to this quiet corner. I understand they met in Paris at some affair or other a few months ago.

Well, I shall welcome him—I, too, am tired—so weary.

After dinner. I have met him. He is suave and charming as ever, but to me as beastlike. When he looked at Cecile, he came nearer his death than at any time since that day on the Zambesi. I could read the beast in his look, and some fine, subtle communication between us made me aware that she could do so too. Anyway, I can easily see that although we retained our respective poses it is a situation which can not continue. The strain is too great. I was overcome by weakness before the end of the dinner and had to be helped up here where I am writing what very possibly will be the last words I shall set down in this matter. For the impression is very strong upon me that something will happen tonight.

Midnight. Here I am back at my desk. This little book seems to have a fascination for me. I have read over the whole story since I sat down to write these words and the extraordinary and unaccountable adventure seems madder than ever. I can think only in bits. I am filled with boiling and contradicting emotions. My love for Cecile which surges hotly through my veins; my hatred for him; my fear which is with me always; a certain wild and reckless gayety in the adventure; then again and running

through everything else, Cecile, my darling, my golden girl, there is the thought of you and everything you mean to me—no, decidedly I am not myself, although I possess apparently a cold power of detached introspection. The feeling of doom that prevailed in me just after dinner has increased tremendously and I am sure that the inevitable conflict will occur soon. The thought of what I have at stake makes me wonder if ever mortal man fought for more—love, life, reason, liberty, all hang here in the scales, and I sit scribbling disconnected sentences. But then—what can I do? I can't search out the man and kill him in his bed—I can't! . . . . hark! . . . . someone is coming toward this room . . . . now he has passed the end of the corridor . . . . I can't hear anything but I know it's true . . . . Aaah! . . . . the hair on the back of my neck is rising . . . . God! like a dog's or any other kind of a beast . . . . the door-knob is turning . . . . slowly . . . . slowly . . . .

From the Diary of Mlle. Cecile Le Saunier

JULY 26, 1913. Now that it is all over, can I write of it calmly?—yet, I wish to do so. Papa says nothing save novels should be written with emotion. It spoils calm thought. But it was tremendous; even now, I can only begin to picture to myself the terrible and frightful peril from which Robert has been saved . . . . that I should have saved him seems too good to be true, nor do I yet know exactly how I did so, but he insists that had I not been drawn to his room that particular moment he would have lost his great fight and would be now—what I can hardly bear to write, or think—what that other man, no, not a man, that *thing* is. Of course, Father explains it all in the only possible manner.

I must tell my story consecutively, however. To begin with, after that horrible dinner last night, I went to my room early. I could not sleep from worry about Robert, but, finally, after reading some proofs for papa, I went to bed but still could not sleep. My love for Robert has become so great a thing that it possesses my entire being and I thought of him constantly. There was something tapping, tapping, tapping, at the back of my brain as I lay there in the darkness. I tried at first to ignore it and sleep. Then, realizing this was impossible, I attempted to solve the message I felt was being carried to me subconsciously. At first I had no success. I merely felt someone was trying to tell me something. It was horrible. As though some poor dumb animal was trying to make me understand a desperate need by half-articulate noises. I suffered for the suffering I felt, but did not, could not, understand.

Then suddenly I did understand, and for a moment was transfixed by icy fear. I swear I read that message which had been hammering at my brain as clearly as though the words had been printed before my eyes. Robert was calling, calling: "Cecile, Cecile, save me. Help!" Just those words, over and over again.

I didn't think coherently after that. Everything was instinct. I jumped out of bed and without even putting on a robe dashed down the corridor toward Robert's room. My one thought was to protect what I loved. I came to the door, and there, I remember, I paused to listen a moment.

From within came sounds, a subdued sort of growling, now and then a word spoken low, and then that growling again—like some great malignant beast—and then, suddenly, as I stood transfixed with horror in front of the door, came a great cry from Robert: "Cecile, oh God, Cecile!"

I rushed at the door-handle and

tugged; the door flew open; and there I saw Robert standing on the far side of the table on which lay his writing things, one hand thrown up as though to ward off a blow, his head half bowed while the fingers of the hand with which he was shielding his face were slowly, but horribly, transforming themselves into claws, were opening and shutting, curved like talons.

In front of him, his back turned to me, on the other side of the table from Robert, stood that man, and even as I looked it seemed to me that I could see, within the man, a great beast sitting, snarling—then I screamed at Robert. I don't know what I said but he raised his head and saw me standing there. Then he seemed to grow in height, his fingers stopped that horrible clutching, his arms fell to his sides, and for a moment the two men stood there glaring at each other.

Suddenly, Robert turned to his dressing table and seized a heavy whip lying there. It was the one we use for Bruno, the St. Bernard.

All the time, it could have been but a few seconds that this was occurring —I mean, since I opened the door— the beast had been saying in a low voice, which had in it that horrible growl, the sound I had noticed when standing in the corridor:

"You're a beast, Hadley, howl— you're a beast—howl, damn you, howl!"

But when Robert turned back toward him with the whip in his hand, his voice suddenly changed and took on a note of terror, the growl in it changed to a whine.

"Don't," he screamed, "don't!"

But Robert raised the whip and brought it down, again and again, lashing his face, his neck, his back, with short cruel strokes, exclaiming: "You animal! You're not worth shooting. Down, beast! Down!"

And as he lashed, the *thing* suddenly groveled at his feet, howling horribly, and turning up to him a tortured face from which all semblance of humanity had fled—he looked and was all animal. Then, rapidly as a flash, he turned and, running on all fours, passed by me, standing in the door, and disappeared from the corridor, snapping his teeth as he ran.

I had turned to watch him, and when I looked back at Robert he was tottering, gripping the table with both hands to support himself, his face ghastly. I rushed to him, and as I put my arms around him, he sank down and fainted, but before he lost consciousness, he whispered as I was bending over him: "We were too strong for him, darling. Love, that's the difference. Thank God, you came in time!"

I looked up just as Father came running up the corridor into the room.

Extract from "Our Subconscious Souls," an article by Dr. Emile Le Saunier, member of the Academy, in "La Vie Psychologique" for September, 1913.

. . . . and nothing is more true than that we have subconscious souls. There is something of the beast in every man; that is a truism, but what is not generally recognized is that this "something to which we allude so casually is susceptible of a clear scientific explanation. I am well aware that this theory, which I am about to present here for the first time, will not meet with universal belief, will indeed, since it is something more than the adding of two and two to get four, be scoffed at by many of my learned confrères, whose erudition outruns their imagination, that quality so vital to true comprehension. But I must regard it as a proved conclusion.

Can it be doubted, when research can explain by this theory so many

instances of curious or abnormal psychology for an explanation of which we were obliged formerly to flounder in the mazes of hypothesis and suggestion, that my theory has the merit of essential truth behind it?

Man arose from the beasts in those far-distant days of which there exists no record, accidental or natural, since all nature has changed a thousand times between then and the earliest recorded dawn of the prehistoric era. Is it too much, my learned brothers, to assume that certain of the original beasts rose the next painful step above beasthood, which, for want of a better word, I shall call manhood, before their fellows? Is not this the history of all progress throughout time? Progress, the upward striving of the race, has never been a spontaneous movement, but has been won through faith and vision, even when its protagonists could not define the faith or fully grasp the vision.

The superbeasts and the beasts from which the former had risen must have been irreconcilable enemies, since progress and reaction have been bitter foes always. They hunted one another and fought long and desperately until man made good his domination over the beasts and the next step forward was possible.

Now I consider that a certain percentage of the human race have still the subconscious souls of the original beasts. They may walk, talk, and possess the culture of men, but the essential soul is wholly and absolutely animal. They are to be pitied and studied. How great this percentage is one can not say. I should hazard a rough guess that perhaps one individual in a million is so afflicted. Many have this beast soul and it never is discovered, although it probably accounts for much insanity that can not be explained otherwise. But that such things exist I consider as proved. The illustration I have I will present later in this paper.

There are also hundreds of normal persons strongly affected by the superbeast subconsciousness. In their case, the psychology, although a trifle abnormal, contains nothing revolting. Persons strongly addicted to hunting are possessed usually of such a subconsciousness, speaking in the age-old desire to hunt down and destroy the beast. Undoubtedly, in cases where this subconsciousness comes into contact with the beast soul proper, there exists naturally a strong and subtle bond, either an affinity or an antagonism. . . . .

A Gray Story of the Horror of Death

THE SUICIDE

By MALCOLM FORD HENRY

I AM a stranger amongst men, for I stand in the midst of friends and they know me not. I speak to them and they stare at me askance, and some of them look startled and grow pale as they peer more closely into my face with an awed intake of breath. They are so amusing, these mortals, that I fain would laugh, though I dare not; for what would be their feelings if they could fathom my true identity? But they never will, they never *can*; and I walk among them safe, for I am a stranger and my secret will never be known to the end of time.

In my mind's eye I can see them now; and I conceal a smile as I think how they would draw away from me with an awful horror in their staring eyes, how the blood would run cold in their veins and their bodies be racked with trembling in the terrible fear of the unknown if they but knew. For I am dead and I am alive. My earthly being is a grim paradox manipulated by the mischievous fingers of some strange fate. I go forth on the walks of men and my body lives, but I am dead.

I am dead. I know that my spirit can not again be burdened with the weight of a human body, condemned to the horrible fate of a terrestrial existence. Then why am I here? Let me look back; let my retrospective gaze dwell upon the past, and perhaps I can fathom the depth of my sin and know why I must live though I am dead.

It began a long time ago—oh, many years ago—and I was but a child and played like other children. But was it like other children? I seem to hear a soft voice saying: "My son, why must you be so rude to your friends?" And so, as time passed on, I played or remained more to myself. One there was who sought to befriend me—one who, as I now think, was as near an angel in human form as ever appeared on this earth. I repulsed her with the rest. That which adds most to my present anguish is the clarity with which these images of former times burn in my mind. I repulsed her with the rest!

My self-centeredness, my colossal selfishness, my impetuosity, my imperiousness! Do I wonder that friends were lacking? I cared for naught, and my deformed soul spread in its path blackness and hatred. I had a mother whose love bounded upon fatuity. Now I have no one, nothing. I am lonely—I am lost. They loved me and I repulsed them.

I lost all my old associates and sought new. I sank lower and lower, yet they clung with strength born of desperation. They pled and fought to save me—ah, in vain! I was ruthless and I crushed in their hearts their boundless faith in me. And then I sought the grim relief, the balm of crushed hopes, restful oblivion—suicide. How sweet a thing the death of the despairing dream!—nothing but the grave, cool, dark, restful: so I turned to suicide but that dream is deceptive—terribly deceptive!

It was so amusing—so highly entertaining! I can remember it all so

distinctly. It seemed I was discouraged and heartsick, but I now wonder if I could really have conceived the agony of the broken hearts that I caused to ache. It was night, night when the darkness and shadows of earth blended with the darkness of my soul, save that mine showed forth the blacker by contrast. Ah, night is very close to death sometimes, and I, with all the despair of a wrecked and broken existence, gave myself up to that sweet dream which has been the elusive lure to myriad hordes that have passed before me.

How dark it was! How dark was everything! I climbed—climbed high to the wretched attic of the house where I lived, for with a last faint glimmering of respect I had removed from the dwelling of my people to live apart in a wretched and destitute portion of the city, far away from the haunts of former days. How dark indeed was the attic, so that I needs must grope my way to the little window. There, without, was a huge iron hook, black and sinister, for what purpose I know not, far above the dark and silent street. To this I caught my rope.

They found me at dawn and I can see them now (for I *did* see them), their wide, distended eyes awed, terrified, and I can hear their cries at first, and later only the hushed, peculiar whispers that always betoken the presence of death. And then they came and cut me down and drew me in with such care, with such dissimulation, as if they feared I might return to life and demand abruptly that I be left to my own devices. And they gathered around me still conversing in the same awed whispers, for they thought I was dead.

And then some very important gentleman was bending over me and inspecting me, and later when all was quiet someone was weeping over me, not passionately or wildly—just a gentle weeping like the wind whistling among the leaves. All the while I stood to one side and watched the proceedings with consummate interest. I stood among the eager, curious crowd, and later I stood alone in the chamber when my mother came. It was not I, but only that lifeless clay that had been mine and I—the real I—was unnoticed.

But still I heard nothing and indeed saw very little, and all the dark, the passionate, the corporeal despair seemed to have fled my mind and left only a more hopeless and consuming sorrow.

I WALKED forth and attempted to find rest, but in vain. I visited my old haunts, but no one noticed or appeared even to realize my presence, and when I spoke to those with whom I had sunk so low, they only stared at me as if I were an intruder. And here was one with whom I consorted most—a dirty, evil wretch, in whom I had always found something of a kindred spirit. I spoke, and he growled a surly reply; but at length, drawn by some strange attraction, he took notice of me and we entered into conversation.

"You knew him?" I asked.

He understood and spat forth a vile curse.

"Ay, for many years!" he growled with sullen reluctance. "And a lower and more depraved dog never found the road to Hell. God! That I should have associated with him! That I should even have known him! I'm bad, sir, about as low and filthy as you can find—but not like him, thank God! not like him. I never had a chance—he had a mother and I saw her up there today. He had a mother—a friend—someone—anyone—I never had. He but cheated the hangman—I would have killed him sooner or later. . . ."

I fled precipitously, my whole soul burning as if in truth consumed by the fires of Hell. This—*this* from one

of the lowest and most depraved villains that ever trod the dark and murky paths of the underworld. I suffered tortures, wandering on and on, knowing not where to betake myself, merely seeking, never finding. I sensed nothing but loss—felt no passion but grief—no sensation but sorrow and the oppressive, desolate emptiness of the world.

At length, I aroused myself and took note of my surroundings, and was not a little surprized and agitated to find that I had wandered into the near vicinity of my childhood home. I attempted to restrain myself, but strode on as if fascinated, my eyes gazing eagerly upon the familiar surroundings—familiar, I say, and yet possessed of a strangeness that I was unable to fathom. How peaceful and quiet the old street appeared in the gentle rays of the late afternoon sun that had burst forth from its concealment behind the day's murky gloom! How peaceful and quiet, indeed, contrasting so harshly with the grating turmoil of my soul! There was the old house, its every familiar line . . . I halted, horrified, frozen. Upon the familiar old door hung a wreath!

For a long time I stood quite motionless while thoughts raced madly through my mind, while I stared at that dismal symbol of death—of the thing that lay beyond those doors. My vision seemed to pierce those stolid, unimpassioned walls and see the thing that lay beyond—that stiff and clammy piece of clay that was I, and I was afraid. Trembling as if taken with the ague, I retraced my footsteps to the little grocery store on the corner and entered hastily, as if to escape something intangible that my mind failed to grasp. Everything was as I remembered it. Behind the counter stood the bent and shrunken figure of the merchant that I had known all my life, but older, much older than when I had last seen him. For a moment I thought he knew me—that unlike others, he sensed what his bleary old eyes could not discern.

"A death," I said in a voice that was hoarse and unreal. "I see there has been a death . . ."

"A death," he repeated vaguely. "Yes, there has been a death. Our loss—hell's gain. God, he was *bad!* For his own sake it was well; but his mother, sir, she is a good woman; she didn't deserve this — her boy — her own boy—if it could only have been otherwise . . ."

"You knew him, then?"

"Knew him, yes. The most despicable scoundrel that ever lived. It was his wilfulness and hot-headed intolerance—he had every opportunity. If he had only died at birth, God knows the world would have been better. . ."

The sun had sunk below the horizon and a cold, damp wind blew from the north. It seemed that things had changed suddenly to match the dismal foreboding of my mind. Fitful glares of lightning lit up the western sky, and low, almost inaudible moans of thunder reached my superacute senses. I hesitated before the house, and the black wreath seemed to oppress, to burden me, then it receded as the door opened softly and *she* stood before me.

For a moment of utter silence we faced each other—silence broken only by that angry, far-away murmur of thunder, then very slowly and softly I stepped within and closed the door. But she continued to gaze at me and spoke in a low apathetic voice.

"There has been a death. Who—who are you?"

"I am an old friend of his," I lied. (No one had ever been his more bitter enemy.) "His mother—she is here?"

"Yes, there."

She followed me into the large, poorly lighted library. The mother

gazed at me from dry eyes that seemed vaguely to misunderstand, and I had a feeling of an animal that had been beaten, not knowing why. The younger woman was making some explanation that reached my ears but made no impression, then the mother came forward to grasp my hand and I found myself making answers to her queries.

"Yes, I knew him well — many years."

"But he was not really bad, oh, tell me that he was not!"

I glanced beyond her at the girl and saw in her eyes an expression of pleading.

"There have been many exaggerations," I replied evasively.

"Oh, he couldn't have been as bad as they say—he couldn't!"

For a moment I thought she was about to break down. Presently, however, she composed herself and inquired in a stronger voice:

"Perhaps you would like to see the body?"

"God, no!" I exclaimed; and then in a gentler voice: "No, I would prefer not."

"Ah, he does not look so bad as that," she protested, cut by my thoughtless exclamation. "He does not look so bad—they have altered his appearance—he is younger—more as he was in the old days—in the old days when he was my little boy. It seems such a long time—so many years, but I have been very patient—very brave. It has been a long time, sir, a very long time since he was a little boy—my baby with his baby laugh and bright eyes, just like other women's babies—and I loved him, too, just as they love their children, and I watched him and prayed for him—watched him grow. Oh, how could I know, how *could* I? God help me, I wanted to be calm—to take it bravely, but he's still mine—still my little baby . . ."

And she broke into passionate weeping that told of a restraint broken for the first time. I was stunned, overwhelmed. Even despite the morning episode, I had expected something else—denunciation, calm regret—anything but this. I turned wildly to the hall, but *she* was before me, and as I gazed into her face, at once quiet and pathetically pleading, I felt a recurrence of the old passion that the years had hardened, obliterated.

"I am sorry," she said with the old gentleness. "I am sorry that you should have been here. It is the first time she has broken, but—oh, why had it to happen?—she that loved him—loved him better than life itself. And I—oh, the months, the years we fought to save him, and every night—every night I pray for him; but it is useless—oh, God! It is useless . . ."

Useless—ay, useless! How utterly vain she could not even dream. Out into the Stygian darkness and fury of the tempest I staggered—on and on—seeking nothing now—finding nothing. It is so dark—so terribly dark, and I am alone—alone with my sorrow. Within me dwells the only lasting—the eternal hell. I am lonely—so lonely—and lost . . .

The LEGACY of HATE

by VICTOR ROUSSEAU

"The girl shivered with fear, but her eyes looked through him as if she did not see him."

THERE must be many who remember the sensation caused by the news that Dr. Ivan Brodsky, during the spring of 1908, succeeded in curing nearly 200 out of some 350 insane patients in the Stafford county asylum. He walked through the wards, talking with the inmates, praying with them, laying on his hands—in short performing precisely what the apostles had been told to do, and achieving that exact result which had been promised to those who had faith.

I believe that, without exception, all those whom he failed to cure were suffering from actual brain lesions, or from some constitutional breakdown, such as senile decay. Those whom he cured were, as he explained to me, in the main persons who had let the strings of their personalities become tangled. By hypnotic treatment Brodsky picked up the raveled threads of consciousness and restored the sufferers to their normal conditions of mind.

I have said "in the main", for there were one or two cases of a different order. It had always been Brodsky's theory that a certain percentage of all cases of mental derangement was due to the actual usurpation of the body by discarnate spirits. These, he explained, attempting to come into physical relations with the external world without the happening of birth or the slow discipline of childhood, could not achieve normal relations, and their confusion of apprehension resulted in

Note.—This is the fourth in a series of stories, each complete in itself, dealing with Dr. Ivan Brodsky, "The Surgeon of Souls."

the incarceration in an asylum of the bodies which they had appropriated.

One such case was that of Rita Durham. A girl of excellent birth, her family rich and respected, she had been engaged to be married when her sad malady declared itself. It was of the nature of general paralysis, exhibiting the characteristic lack of muscle co-ordination, and from time to time attacks of homicidal mania ensued. On this account her relatives had been compelled to have her confined in the asylum. The homicidal mania was equally suicidal; she had attempted to do herself severe injury on several occasions, on one of these cutting deeply into her left wrist with a pair of scissors.

Dr. Brodsky's sympathy and interest were aroused; he obtained permission from her lover, who was a blood connection, to remove her to his private sanitarium, in which he treated similar cases. The lover, Ralph Richepin, was a young American of French extraction. He was a native of Louisiana, a man of much intelligence and character, but of a settled melancholy. Brodsky and I were much drawn toward him, and at the doctor's suggestion he took up his residence with us to watch the progress of the cure.

I THINK it was on the third evening that we threshed out the matter. We had discovered that Richepin, whose intelligence was too great for a dogmatic skepticism to find vantage ground within his mind, was a student of psychics and had virtually arrived at that stage of belief tempered by doubt which most of us come to.

"I have told you," said Dr. Brodsky, "that I believe Miss Durham's insanity is due to spiritual possession. General paralysis at the age of twenty is practically an impossibility. But in order to effect a cure it is essential that you should tell me the history of that family tragedy in which you were both prominent actors."

The young man stared. "How do you know?" he cried.

Brodsky smiled. "Some things are self-evident," he answered.

Immediately the young man broke out impetuously with his tale.

Rita Durham, he said, had been engaged, two years before, to be married to his only brother, Jean. They had been second cousins, and the marriage, after the ancient French custom, had been one of convenience. Jean was the elder; by custom, dating back before the Code Napoleon, Jean would inherit the bulk of the estate. At the time of the engagement Philip was a boy at college. He returned to find the girl whom he dimly remembered grown into a woman of remarkable intelligence and beauty. They met, loved at first sight; and after a desperate attempt to keep faith with his brother, Philip avowed his love and learned that it was returned. On the day before that set for the wedding they went away and were secretly married.

"Then she is your wife?" exclaimed Brodsky, startled.

The young man assented mournfully. "She is my wife," he replied, "although her relatives are not aware of it. In fact, the tragedy which resulted, and my wife's insanity, which came on almost immediately afterward, have prevented me from declaring it. Perhaps this was cowardly—perhaps a mere desire to shield her name from the taint of scandal. Human motives are mixed at best. Well, we were married and came back together, intending to go to Jean and beg his forgiveness. We met him in the garden. He came up to Rita and placed his arm round her. She shrank away—she clung to me involuntarily, and in that simple gesture she betrayed all. With one cry of despair my brother turned and ran

into the house. I followed, ran to his room, and found myself looking into the barrel of a pistol. Before he could fire I wrenched the weapon from his hand, flung it upon the floor, and turned to leave the room. As I closed the door I heard a report. My brother had shot himself through the brain, dying immediately. Yet, even as his eyes closed in death, the darkening pupils transfixed me for one moment with a look of intense malignity. That look I shall never forget! It haunts me, and will do so to my dying day, for my brother died unreconciled."

"How long after this did the first signs of insanity present themselves?" asked Brodsky.

"Fifteen days afterward she was stricken with paralysis all along the left side," said the young man. "The same day symptoms of mental aberration made themselves manifest. Slowly the insanity increased; she thought she was my brother, hated me, and tried to assault me. The paralysis increased likewise, until all the muscles of the body were involved, except those of the left hand, which she regards as an exterior organism and has tried to destroy—once with burning, once with the scissors. And she thinks she is my brother still," he ended in a pathetic whisper.

"You believe that she is possessed of your brother's spirit?" asked Brodsky, bluntly.

"I don't know what to believe. In the cold light of reason—no. The doctors say it is a delusion common to the insane. But—if it is not my brother, how can she have mentioned things that none except my brother and myself can possibly have known? If it be indeed he, I shall pray for the day when he will pardon me and cease to torture her in revenge."

"Was your brother a man who would torture a woman?" asked Brodsky.

"My brother was the incarnation of chivalry and honor," the young man answered.

"And yet you think that after the uneventful change called death he would be capable of so changing as to wreak an ignoble revenge upon her?"

Philip Richepin was amazed. "But if the character does not change after death——" he began, and hesitated.

Brodsky caught up the thought. "My dear fellow, character is not the creation of a moment; the character of each of us is the product of millions of incarnations, beginning with the unicellular ameba and ending God knows when, where, and how. Some eocene pig may be the ancestor of the gourmand, some dog of the loyal soldier, some lynx of the crafty. Death does not perceptibly modify the character; in fact, it brings it out the more strongly, the artificial circumstances of life being removed."

"Still he hates and upbraids me," said the young man. "I have begged him to pardon me, to listen—but he will not hear, he asks to be set free from his dungeon, in which he thinks I have confined him."

"His dungeon?" repeated Brodsky, slowly. "Then he probably does not know that he is dead!"

"What?" we both cried.

The doctor turned to me.

"Please imagine that I suddenly pull a pistol from my pocket and blow out your brains," he said; "you fall to the ground; presently you awake from a sort of dream to find yourself still in this room. You see me and hear me say: 'My boy, I have just killed you.' Perhaps you have somehow, possibly through desire, acquired the body of our friend here. Would you think you were dead?"

"Then you think my brother is ignorant of whose body he inhabits?" asked the young man, abstractedly.

"Precisely," said Dr. Brodsky. "And without the information you have rendered me I could never cure our patient. Now, if it be indeed Jean, and we can persuade him that he is dead, and can induce him to forgive and to depart, all may yet come out well. But first we shall require a few more days of purely physical treatment."

"And I may see her?" begged Philip, reverting unconsciously to the feminine pronoun.

He had sedulously kept Philip away from his patient, partly by reason of the antagonism which his presence seemed to arouse, partly because Philip was unable to realize the change in the personality of his wife. Like most of us, he still confused the body with the soul.

The inattention and lack of sympathy of paid attendants at the asylum had actually, in Dr. Brodsky's opinion, aggravated the conditions which existed, and upon removing the girl to his sanitarium he had immediately placed her under the care of two intelligent and sympathetic nurses, who, while guarding her carefully, sought and had begun to win her confidence. She had begun to recognize all of us. But she tried continually to injure the useless hand.

Dr. Brodsky had not addressed her by any name. One morning, however, he entered and grasped the girl's right hand cordially.

"Well, Jean, how are you this morning?" he said.

The effect was electrical. The girl's voice choked with her emotion. Falteringly she replied: "You are the first who has called me by name since I have been here. Will you not tell me why I am kept a prisoner so long?" she added, pathetically.

"Where are you, Jean, then?" Brodsky asked.

"I'm in prison," she answered.

"A very different prison from what you imagine," he muttered. "Why are you in prison?"

She passed her right hand wearily across her eyes. "It is so long," she murmured. "I—I can not remember——"

"You will remember," answered the doctor, gently.

Suddenly the door burst open and Philip appeared upon the threshold. "I must and will see her," he cried. "I can endure it no longer. She is my wife, and I demand my right to speak to her."

The spell was broken. The hardly uttered words of remembrance died upon the patient's lips. One instant she looked at Philip with implacable hate; the next, with a bound like a panther, in spite of the disabled side, the girl had sprung full at his face. I saw the right hand raised—I saw the glint of steel in it, the broken fragment of a knife which she had secreted somehow. Then, before the well-aimed blow could fall, an extraordinary event occurred. The paralyzed left hand leaped up to meet the blow and arrested it. The two hands seemed to struggle together; slowly the right hand opened and the left seized the steel and flung it upon the floor. All this happened before either of us could move. A moment afterward Brodsky had caught Philip by the shoulders and hurried him from the room.

I had never seen the doctor so angry.

"I resign this case," he cried. "You have disobeyed my instructions in the most flagrant manner. You have perpetuated your wife's insanity. She shall go back instantly to the asylum."

It took us both an hour to pacify him. The young man, overwhelmed with repentance, actually went down on his knees before him. I think my intercession was what saved the day.

"Well, then, I'll take the case in hand again," the doctor muttered. "But it will take another week to restore her to her former condition," he cried, angrily.

It was a difficult week. For several days the girl remained obstinately mute, and when at length she consented to speak, she confined her speech mostly to monosyllabic demands to be "let out." However, the tact and patience of Brodsky ultimately conquered. There came a day when the interrogation could be renewed.

It was evident, however, that the shock of Philip's entrance still remained as a disturbing element in the patient's mind. Some shock was needed to revive the faded memories. Brodsky supplied this. Of a sudden he pulled a pistol from his pocket, cocked it, and leveled it at my head. A choking sound came from the girl's throat. "The pistol!" she gasped.

"What do you see?" cried Brodsky, hurrying to her side.

Her eyes were closed, her face deadly pale.

"My brother—I tried to murder him!" she cried.

"Why?" Brodsky persisted.

"Because he robbed me of the thing I loved best upon earth," she answered, wildly. "Like a thief he stole away her love from me. I went to her in the garden—I had noticed their increasing intimacy but suspected nothing. Now I saw them standing together watching me. When I went up she shrank away and clung to him. My brain seemed to be on fire. I ran into my room to find a weapon. He followed me. He was always stronger than I. He snatched the pistol from my hand, flung it upon the floor, and went away contemptuously. Then in my despair and humiliation I placed the barrel to my own head and fired."

"And then?"

"I must have been unconscious for some time, and yet I am sure the bullet only struck me a glancing blow, for when I came to myself I felt strangely well and at ease. My hatred, too, had largely disappeared. And I passed out of the room, treading as though on air, and went to look for them to hear their plea for mercy. Then I might have granted it. But they were sitting together, not embracing—only sad—and they were attired in black, for somebody had died."

"Yes," interposed Brodsky, eagerly; "who had died?"

"I do not know. They would not answer nor look at me. There seemed a conspiracy of silence. When I passed them the girl shivered with fear, but she either kept her eyes averted or let them look through me as though she did not see me. It was a plan to punish me. For days I seemed to wander through the house, never resting, eating or sleeping. But none of all those whom I spoke to answered me or appeared conscious of my presence.

"Soon I saw the coffin of the dead person borne to the churchyard. I followed among the mourners. I heard my name spoken. Before the coffin was lowered into the hole I bent forward and saw that it contained a waxen replica of myself. Then the ghastly truth became clear to me. They were pretending that I had died, that I, the real I, who wandered through the house, was an impostor, perhaps a madman. And even at the graveside my betrothed smiled at her lover and linked her arm through his. A desperate determination flashed into my brain. I had discovered since my abortive attempt at suicide that I possessed the faculty of reading her thoughts, that I could will her silently to do the things I wished. Now I resolved to project my personality into hers, to possess

her mind and soul, leaving to him the mere empty outward clay. With one superhuman concentration of will I seemed to effect my purpose. I felt that for an instant the substance of our souls was mingled. And then——"

"And then——?"

"I found myself in the horrible prison from which you freed me, only to bring me here. She had gone, I do not know where. Of all I know, he only remains and comes to taunt me. Where is she? If I knew she was happy I could be content under any affliction, but he will not tell me."

She ceased and regarded the doctor with large, mournful eyes. He turned aside for an instant.

"Convince him," I whispered.

"I can not," answered the doctor.

"Show her a mirror. Surely she will realize——"

"Can you convince an insane person of his delusion?" asked Brodsky, quietly. "She would not see her features reflected in the glass, but those of Jean Richepin. Or, if she did see them, she would think it was some trick to deceive her. The only method of carrying conviction is to induce Jean Richepin to put his hatred out of his heart—hatred, which blinds us to realities."

He turned to the patient. "And you still hate your brother?" he demanded, gently.

"May he suffer as he has made me suffer!" came the wild cry. "Once I could have forgiven, but his guilty conscience has led him to perpetuate this further injustice, to confine me here. May he never know happiness night or day, may he——"

"Hush!" said Brodsky, lifting up a warning hand. "He is your brother still."

The girl ceased to speak and remained silent, her lips parted, gazing into the doctor's face intently.

"Years ago you played together as children," he continued, solemnly. "You loved each other then and afterward. Can you not find forgiveness for him somewhere in your heart, even if he has involuntarily broken his faith toward you?"

"I could never forgive him," she answered, sullenly. "He has robbed me of my love and of my freedom."

"Think once more," said Brodsky, quietly. "Suppose you were at the point of death. Would you carry this hatred over into the grave? For be very sure that there is a hereafter, as there have been many pasts, for each of us. Are you so free from sin that you can not forgive, knowing that you must both sometime stand before your Maker?"

I saw the tears rise slowly into her eyes. She hid her face in her uninjured hand and wept.

"I don't know," she answered, her voice broken by sobs. "He has wronged me unpardonably. Perhaps—perhaps some day, when I come to die——"

"Look at me!" Brodsky commanded. "Your time has come to die!"

"What!" she cried, starting.

"You are at the door of death," said Brodsky, remorselessly. "I am no jailer. You have been sick in mind since you inflicted that wound upon yourself. Your brain has been affected. All that you imagine you remember is the mirage of dreams. By providence conscience has been restored to you at the last, in order that you might not die unforgiving. Your brother is here; you will see him and pardon him!"

The words seemed to sink into her soul. Her face took on the ashen gray of the dying.

"I do not ask that you forgive him out of fear," continued Brodsky, "but because it is right. Even were you well, could you live, I would still ask it. Say that you will forgive him."

"I will forgive him!" she muttered, and for the first time the useless left hand trembled. Brodsky looked at me. I understood what he meant me to do. I went in haste for Philip.

When we got back, the girl was drawn up among the pillows and the doctor was leaning over her, whispering to her. I do not know what he said, but upon her face was a new aspect of happiness. Philip saw it; he came forward and bent down.

"Forgive me, Jean!" he muttered, seizing the hand that hung so limply down and covering it with kisses.

And even in that moment the incongruity of the situation broke in on me. For we three men, sitting and kneeling by the side of this frail, paralyzed girl, had become oblivious to her sex in the presence of the eternal soul that now transcended the flesh. Let only fools scoff at immortal things hereafter!

Yet one thing troubled me, that Brodsky should have lied to her. As if divining my thoughts, he came up and took me aside, leaving the two together.

"There is no way out except through the gates of death," he whispered. "The delusion is too deeply rooted; his soul must pass out by the death of the body. Because it took its only life rashly no spirit met and welcomed it on the other side of the dark river of death. Yet its hold is weak, and, by recreating the scene, I can bring about the actual manifestations of mortality."

"But—but if she is not waiting, ready to enter in?" I cried.

"She has never wholly left it," he answered. "Her portion is the left hand, on which Philip placed the wedding ring."

He drew near to the bedside. On his knees Philip still pleaded.

"I forgive you," the girl murmured. "It is not because I have come to die, but because I never bore you any hatred in my heart, my brother. But you should have come to me and told me. Do you think I would have bound my love unwillingly to her vows? You should have been frank with me. And now," she went on, plaintively, "I must lose her whom I love. I can not bear it. If she could have loved me——"

The doctor raised his hand solemnly. "She is your brother's by the right of their love," he answered. "Your part is nobler than a lover's. Tell me who loves the more; the lover, jealously selfish of his love, wrapped in his own egotistic feelings, or the parent that guards and watches over his child?"

She looked at him wonderingly.

"That is your task, the nobler one. To watch over her, her spiritual guardian, until the time comes when they, too, pass over into the realms of immortality, where like is drawn to like, and there is no atom of love that does not attract love to it. There is neither marrying nor giving in marriage there."

He rose and fumbled in his pocket.

"Go, Jean," he said with terrible emphasis. "Your hate has worked itself out in suffering. Now the account is squared." He looked into her eyes. "You died when the bullet from your revolver pierced your brain," he ended; and suddenly his hand leaped from his pocket and we heard the pistol crack. Had he shot her? No, for the ball went overhead and a cloud of plaster fell from above. But a shiver ran through the patient's limbs, the eyes opened and closed, a sigh broke from her breast and she lay still. With a mad cry Philip leaped forward, but Brodsky's arms closed round him and held him as in a vise. "Take her left hand in yours and wait silently," he said. "She is not dead."

The body grew pale and cold, the features pinched and peaked. The muscles stiffened like those of a corpse, but all the while the little left hand glowed and the pulse stirred in the slender wrist. Then at last, little by little, the warmth mounted the arm, flushed the throat, the wizened appearance vanished, the breast heaved gently, the eyelids fluttered and opened. There was a new glance of intelligence in the eyes, resting with unutterable love upon those of Philip. I went out softly and Brodsky followed me.

NOTE—"The Major's Menagerie," the next story in this series, will appear in WEIRD TALES next month.

Danse Macabre*

By JEAN LAHORS

(Translated by Bertram Galbraith)

Click, click, click . . . Death is prancing;
Death, at midnight, goes a-dancing,
Tapping on a tomb with a talon thin,
Click, click, clack, goes the grisly violin.

The cold wind howls, the trees are stark,
The grim, white skeletons glide in the dark;
They run and leap, in their ghastly shrouds,
'Neath the gloom of the lowering tempest clouds.

Click, click, click, the thin arms toss . . .
And the wraiths pair off on the slimy moss
Who were swains of yore . . . there's a crackling noise
As they seek in vain for forgotten joys.

Click, click, clack . . . the Eternal Riddle
Is the theme Death rasps on his dreary fiddle.
The drapery falls . . . the dancer's nude,
But her partner clips her with clasp more rude.

Click, click, click . . . what a saraband!
They form a gaunt ring . . . hand in hand!
Click, click, click, on the weedy turf,
And a king is frisking with a serf.

Hark! in a trice they are hushed and flown,
For the morn is at hand and the cock has crown.
'Twas a gala night for the souls set free;
Then hail Death and Equality!

*This is another version of the poem which is said to have inspired Camille Saint-Saens to compose his "Danse Macabre." One version was printed in WEIRD TALES last June.

The Star Shell

A Weird-Scientific Serial

By GEORGE C. WALLIS *and* B. WALLIS

The Story So Far

HARRY WILLIAMSON, Mark Dexter and Prince Danda Singh, inspecting Dexter's space-ship, the *Star Shell*, are catapulted through space by the treachery of Professor Norden, who abandons the three on Europa (one of the moons of Jupiter). They are rescued by Jovian astronomers and taken to Jupiter, where Professor Norden has already landed with the *Star Shell*, but the party falls into the smoking ruins of a city that has just been captured by the Barbarians, and finds itself in the midst of the enemy.

CHAPTER 11

A FIGHT AGAINST FEARFUL ODDS

"MARK," said I, "this looks very much like the end of it all. The *Star Shell* is smashed, and we can't get back home. We have come a long way round to fall into the hands of a lot of savages. We could have stayed on the Earth and gone to Africa instead. But now we are here, we may as well make a fight of it and die game. It will suit me a deal better to go down here, fighting in the open air, on solid ground, than to face some of the other sorts of death we have been risking lately."

"Have you here any weapons?" Dandy asked the pilot.

"One fire-ray projector, charged for a few hours; that is all."

"Then for us is there hope yet," said the prince. "We have little weapons here that strange may be to the Barbarians. Over yonder seems dark, like the edge of a forest. Why not there let us try to reach?"

The Jovians glanced at each other, seeming to consult one another's unspoken thoughts, and then Delius said, in a sort of resigned-to-the-worst tone: "Let it be as our visitors wish. It may, after all, be possible; it may be better than immediate death."

So, though we knew our arrival had been noted by the Barbarians, who were running toward the smoking ruins from all directions, we opened the doors and stepped out of the stuffy little space-ship. Though we went to our death, yet it was a relief to be in the open. The air was breathable, though thicker and heavier than our earthly atmosphere. Huge gray masses of cloud obscured most of the stars, rifts in the rolling volumes of vapor now and then revealing the little satellite from which we had come. It seemed far more difficult to walk here than on Europa, or even than it does on Earth.

"My feet feel weighted down with lead," said Prince Danda.

"It is not to be wondered at, stranger," Delius observed. "Owing to the immense size of Jupiter, gravitation is two and a half times stronger than on your world. It does not seem quite so bad as that because Jupiter is turning so fast on its axis that the centrifugal force counteracts our weight to a certain extent. You will get used to it. What you will find more troublesome, I'm afraid, is the short day and night. As our planet turns round in less than ten of your hours, we have not quite five hours of darkness and not quite five hours of daylight. The night is already half gone."

"And here come your friends the enemy," said I. "This way, all of you; follow the shadow of the ruins."

Though we were strangers in a strange world, it never struck me till afterward that it was confounded cheek on my part to assume the leadership. But I knew what I wanted, and nobody else seemed inclined to start, so they all fell in under me, Jovians and Earthmen, without a word of protest.

The line of charred ruins I led them along went westward through the deserted maze of buildings, in the direction of the dark forest Dandy had pointed out. Beyond the outskirts of the sacked town lay a comparatively clear space of ground, the bulk of the Barbarians being encamped to north and south. If we could only win to the edge of the open, I argued, before daybreak, we might make a wild dash for liberty.

The shouting of the savages who were seeking us grew louder and nearer. They found the shell we had left before we had gone far, and presently, glancing back, we saw it gleaming through the darkness, a white-hot object enveloped in green flames. Scores of dark figures were dancing around it.

"The Green Fire!" exclaimed Oberon. "It is the Barbarians' one great invention. In the depths of their country they have mines of a green substance that burns more fiercely, more swiftly, than anything else of which we have knowledge. Nothing can resist it. But they are upon us! Have you the ray-projector ready, Delius?"

"Here, behind this low wall," I said, as Delius nodded. "This is a good place for the first stand. Wait till they are much nearer before you open out on them."

The rampart of the wall before us, the side of an undamaged house behind, and several alleyways for retreat, it was an ideal place to give battle.

Yelling, dancing, waving their weapons, brandishing smoking green fires in little metal baskets slung from poles, the Barbarian horde burst upon us. Already gloating over their victims, they tauntingly called upon the weaklings to come out and look death in the face. They were of a slightly larger type than the Jovians with us—rough, dark, hairy, muscular, with wrinkled faces and deep-sunken eyes. They carried swords and spears and wore but scanty dress or armor.

"Come out, come out!" they yelled, as they rushed down upon us. We understood them easily; it seemed there was but one language on all Jupiter. "Come out, weak ones, who shudder at blood; come out and taste of the Green Fire! We shall feed you with it—it shall make you strong!"

Our companions shivered, glancing at each other fearfully. The hands of Delius, as he lifted the tube of the Blue Ray to the top of the wall, trembled. I began to understand better why this civilized race was not master of the planet.

"Is it needful to slay them?" asked Oberon. "The end will be the same, whatever we do. Had we not better surrender?"

"Not if I know it!" I cried grimly. "I'm not built that way. Let them come, and we will give them such a surprize as they have never had before. Ready? One—two—*three!*"

We all stood up together and fired at close range into the scrum. I guess they got a shock. The mere sight of us three strange giants, shouting an unknown language, and shooting flashes of flame and smoke from our revolvers, must have been an eye-opener. We fired our automatics as fast as they would work, and the brutes fell in squirming

heaps. Delius plucked up courage and swept their front with the scorching Blue Ray. Screaming madly, shouting, shrieking, as the burning heat fell on them, the Barbarians recoiled.

"One to us!" I cried.

The three Jovians were silent, pale-faced. Even to save their own lives it hurt them to take other life, to inflict pain.

The Barbarians were tough, however, with the courage of brutes. They surged up to the attack again and again, a ferocious mob, attempting to fling their baskets of fire over our rampart. We gave them the same hot reception, and three times we hurled them back, howling and beaten, over the scores of their dead and dying. We stood up on the low wall, pumping lead into them; the Blue Ray burnt up the trodden grass and made the very ground smolder and smoke.

A long rest, another vain attack, and then the Barbarians drew off to a considerable distance, holding a sort of council.

"They are sure to try and take us in rear or flank, soon," said Mark. "How far is it across to the forest, Delius?"

"Three measures, Solitarian. And reading your thought, I can translate that into nearly six miles, as you reckon distance. It will be day soon, when you will see it for yourself. If we are fortunate, we may be able to seize some of the zemas before our intentions are discovered. Once in the Red Forest, we shall be safe, for no man ventures there of his own will."

"Zemas?" queried Danda.

"The fleet animals that are used throughout our planet for riding upon," explained Oberon. "For thousands of years they have been tamed in our service, tamed so well, indeed, that they answer to our thoughts of command. Very graceful and swift animals they are. When day dawns you will see herds of them on the plain. Yes, I understand; you have similar animals on your planet: you call them horses."

It was uncanny to have one's thoughts read like that, but we grew accustomed to the novelty in time.

"The sooner we get astride a few zemas the better, then," said I. "It is growing light over yonder, and judging by the sounds, our enemies are working round us."

As the dawn neared and the cloudy brightness spread from the east, we began to take stock of our chances. The Barbarians watching us in front seemed to be waiting for something, and the ruined town in our rear was buzzing with unseen activity. The light grew, things took shape, and we found that only a short, narrow lane separated us from the open ground and the herds of grazing zemas. Slender, antelopelike creatures these were, spotted like leopards.

"Time we were moving," I said. "Now is our chance or never."

And close on that, with a savage outbreak of cries that seemed to be an answer to my words, pandemonium broke loose. The Barbarians in front rushed once more to the attack, a headlong, death-defying mob; from every hole and avenue around, dark forms leapt into the light, and the house behind us became suddenly a roaring furnace of green flame.

No time for standing on ceremony! We gave them a salvo of bullets, a wild whirl of the Blue Ray, and then took to our heels, heading for the open. Under a shower of spears and arrows, we gained it, ran for the nearest group of zemas—the animals did not seem at all perturbed by us or by the noise—and mounted. They were not saddled, but their thick manes made excellent bridles for men in a hurry.

Well in advance of the frantic horde of enraged and surprized foes, we dashed across the plain, plunging

recklessly through the herds of grazing animals, on the way to what we Earthmen imagined to be safety.

Glancing over my shoulder, I saw a spear transfix our last man, the Jovian who had piloted us from Europa. He fell without a cry, dead. He was not a good runner, and had been the last man to secure a zema. It would have been committing suicide to turn back, so I didn't say a word to the others. We pressed on for all we were worth, and just in front of the yelling pursuit, ran into the shelter of the trees.

CHAPTER 12

THE FOREST OF THE GREAT RED WEED

For a mile more we urged our zemas on amongst the red-leaved trees of the forest, dodging the low branches and the hanging festoons of parasitic growth as best we could. Our lithe, spotted mounts seemed very sure of foot, but now rather slow in the going. I had scarcely formed the wish to halt, when my zema, with ears cocked forward nervously, stopped. The others halted at the same moment. There was no sign of pursuit; the cries of the baffled Barbarians had died away.

"It is out of that danger that we well are," said Dandy, jumping stiffly to the ground. "But I see not why they have allowed us to escape. They could us have here followed."

"It gets me, too," added Mark, looking enquiringly at our friends. "But we are one short! Where's what's-his-name?"

I told them, though I saw that the Jovians read the truth in my mind when I began to speak.

"It is well that Patio died quickly," said Delius. "For that we must be glad. Our own fortune may not be so good. We have escaped the Barbarians, strangers, but we are in the Forest of the Red Weed. I see that that does not trouble you yet—it will do so later. Even the zemas, you notice, are ill at ease, and do not wish to go farther. This great forest-waste is the most dangerous region on Jupiter. Here live all the fiercest brutes, the largest monsters, the venomous reptiles. Here dwell the big apes, the progenitors of our race. Even the Barbarians, who love the ordinary forests, dread this place because of the Red Weed."

"The Red Weed?" we asked.

"It is a wonderful plant, scientifically considered, but horrible in its nature. You see one over there, right in our path. Its huge, broad leaves, spiky and sword-edged, are of a blood-red color, and grow to the height of a man. It is omnivorous, eating other plants, any sort of animal that comes within reach of its poisoned spikes, or even men. At night it exudes a narcotic vapor that lulls its victims to a sleep that knows no waking. All over Jupiter this Red Weed grows, but both ourselves and the Barbarians have waged such war upon it that nowhere else but in this great waste does it flourish in such profusion or reach such a size. Something in the soil is favorable to its growth. And so our fiercest and weakest wild animals, avoiding man, find a refuge here."

"Well," said I, cheerfully, "we shall have to try and get through it somehow, and find a way of reaching your people."

"Quite so," answered Delius. "But we have before us a journey of more than 2,500 measures."

"Nearly 8,000 miles, Harry," said Mark, with the air of one who has made a great discovery. "The fact is, I knew about this place years ago—I've seen it many a time! It is oval in shape, 27,000 miles long and 8,000 miles across. Why, you can't pick up a book on astronomy without reading of the remarkable Red Spot on the planet Jupiter, and I have often put

my telescope on it. From 1878 to 1882 it was a much more vivid red than it has been ever since. And now we are in it!"

"Yes, about four of *our* years ago, the Red Weed flourished so luxuriantly that the night breezes from it poisoned thousands of people. Since then it has diminished greatly."

"But why must we go across this Red Spot?"

"Because the Barbarian lands adjoin it on east and west; and now that they have overrun the north, to go south is our only hope," was the Jovians' answer.

Eight thousand miles of forest to traverse on this strange world, a forest filled with all sorts of wild beasts! And with two human beings as companions who were too squeamish to kill anything if they could help it!

"Anyhow, let us make a start," said I. "In a year or two we ought to worry a way out. If there are wild animals, there ought to be game, and food."

The Jovians exchanged glances, and I wondered what was wrong, but nothing was said then. We ate some of the stale grub we had brought all the way from Earth, via Europa, eked out with a few tasteless tablets of concentrated proteid Oberon gave us, had an hour or two of sleep in an open space well away from any Red Weed, and then began our long journey.

It certainly had a spice of adventure about it, and had Mark and Dandy and I been alone, even in spite of the fact that we were on a strange world more than 350,000,000 miles away from home—and with little prospect of ever getting back—we would have entered into the fun of the thing. It was surprizing how quickly we had become accustomed to the extra gravitation, the denser atmosphere, the short days and nights.

The trouble began with the zemas. We said it would be easier and quicker to ride than to walk, much as the animals seemed to object to going on. Delius declared flatly, however, that we had no right to take the creatures into the forest to die, and he and his companion would not do so. Of course we couldn't ride off and leave them to follow on foot, we had to stick together; and so the zemas were let loose to go back to their Barbarian owners.

Then, a day or two later, we shot a fine animal of the bison type, but with only one horn on its forehead, and made ready for a good feed over the camp fire. The Jovians would not taste of the meat at any price, preferring their own proteid tablets and such edible plants as they could find. They even went out of sight whilst we had the first real square meal we had tasted for a long time. Prince Danda, remembering many of the doctrines of the Hindoo religions, was the only one of us influenced by the attitude of the Jovians.

"To us it seems most strange," said Delius. "The Barbarians eat the corpses of slain animals, even as you do, but we of the civilized race have long outgrown the degrading practise. We know that vegetable and chemical food is purer, more nutritious, less costly, does no violence to our finer feelings. We could no more bring ourselves to kill a fellow-creature for food than we could drink its blood. You are progressive; some day you will become a vegetarian race."

"And in the meantime, that bison steak was prime!" I retorted.

But we agreed to differ amicably, and each party to let the other follow its own ideas.

For some time we got on fairly well without meeting any of the horrors we were prepared for. There was lots of game and plenty of streams, so we had no lack of food

or water. Our avoidance of the Red Weed, both by night and day, became almost automatic. One morning we met a reptile about ten feet long—a scaly snake that waddled on short legs with ten-toed feet—and trouble seemed brewing, as it could waddle faster than we could run. But Oberon had sense enough to give the nightmare a taste of the Blue Ray, and it suddenly remembered a pressing engagement elsewhere.

And then I tumbled right into the thick of the excitement. We had to be careful of our cartridges, so when we sighted game we spent a good time trailing it to make sure of a dead certain shot. For about a week of Jovian days after we had seen the walking snake, the texotis—as our friends called the one-horned bison—had been rather scarce. Mark and I were out after a fine specimen one evening, all the others being in camp, and though unsuccessful near sunset, we decided to try for it a little longer. We separated as the texotis shambled down a curving valley, Mark taking a short cut to try and send him back to where I waited.

Evidently the texotis quickly got wind of my companion, for he turned in his tracks and came back, charging full tilt at me before I expected him. With his one horn lowered, and snorting defiance in his desperation, he was an awkward customer to face. If only we had got those repeating rifles out of the *Shell* before Norden turned traitor!

I fired twice—but what use were revolver bullets fired in a hurry against that charging mountain of solid flesh and shaggy hide? He didn't even blink. There was nothing for it but to get out of his way—if I could.

I jumped aside when he was nearly on me—I could not jump far because of the clumps of Red Weed that grew around the spot—and he went blundering past. Right through a mass of the deadly red foliage he plunged, bellowing, and suddenly disappeared. At the same moment, before I had time to save myself, the ground gave way beneath me and I followed the texotis down a slithering, gravelly slope.

Clutching wildly at anything that came handy, and yelling for Mark at the top of my voice, I went rolling into the deep pit that had been hidden from me before by the fringing growth through which the animal's charge had carried him. The crumbling edge had given way under his weight, dragging me down as well.

It was lucky that I fell upon a soft bed of moss at the bottom, for the last three yards of the drop were over a ledge and almost vertical. When I struggled to my feet, bruised all over, I didn't like the look of things at all.

The roughly circular pit had steep sides, nowhere less in depth than the fifteen feet where I had tumbled in. Not much chance of climbing out. It was filled with clusters of luxuriant Red Weed, and bushes of Red Weed fringed it round. Somewhere amongst the undergrowth the texotis was tramping about and bellowing, searching for me in his implacable fury. It was nearly night; already it was dark in the pit. And after sunset the Red Weed would fill that round hollow with the poisonous vapor of death!

CHAPTER 13

THE CANNIBAL APES

The worst about it all was that I was alone. Company gives everyone a sort of courage. What had happened to Mark? Why hadn't he answered my call?

Just as I asked myself that, I heard the crack of his revolver, and a quickly stifled cry. That was all. Desperate with anxiety, I began clawing at the steep, slippery slope. The

friable soil gave way beneath me every time I put my weight upon it. I gained a few inches, by frantic efforts, only to fall back as far next moment. At last I got hold of an exposed root—a root of the Red Weed—and pulled myself a third of the way up. Another couple of lifts like that, I said, and I might be out of the pit before the night filled it with poison. Already it was so dark that I could not see objects very clearly.

And then, as I made another leap, glancing upward, I saw a trio of grinning heads hanging over the ledge of the pit. They were the heads of hairy, apelike creatures, tall as earthly men. They gibbered and mowed at me, opening and shutting their projecting jaws, and then, seeing that I hesitated, one of them stretched down a long, muscular arm, holding out the broken branch of a tree for me to grasp.

The act seemed friendly enough, but his gloating expression gave me a sickly feeling. Yet I could not very well disdain that helping hand. Anything, I thought, would be better than dying alone in the pit of the weed. I looked down—to see the dim form of the texotis, mad with rage and pain from his struggles amongst the spiked foliage, waiting for me with lowered horn.

There was no help for it. I grabbed the stick and was jerked up to safety by the big ape. He and his companions peered at me in the dim light, grunting curiously, and then my captor swung me under his arm as you might carry a parcel, and set off at a shambling pace down the valley. The sun was just setting, and two pale moons rode in the cloudy sky.

About half a mile down, the trio stopped in a clearing and were joined by a fourth companion, who lifted from the ground and carried something in the way I was carried. It was Mark! I could not see his face as we hurried along in the darkness, but our captors made no effort to stop our talking.

"Glad you're alive, old son," I said, the lurching gait of my bearer jerking the words out of me erratically. "I heard your shot. Did you get one of them?"

"No, Harry, I missed—and a good thing, too, or I believe they would have torn me to pieces. I got a knock that sent me silly, and then I woke up to see you being toted along. How did they collar you? You yelled hard enough."

I told him my little adventure, and by the time I had finished, the giant apes had reached their lair. It was a shallow cave in a sandy cliff at the top of a barren slope. They dumped us down as though we were mere logs, and squatted round us, chattering and gesticulating, two of them striking their breasts with their clenched fists so that the night seemed throbbing with the beat of drums. Presently two more came and joined the circle, and then another couple.

"An interesting sort of animal charivari," said I, "but what's the idea? How long is the serenade going on?"

I had an uncomfortable suspicion of the truth, but Mark's reply sent a cold shiver of horror down my back.

"They are only waiting for daybreak, Harry. These are cannibal apes: Oberon told me of them. They eat their own dead, and any Barbarians or civilized men who fall into their clutches. Breakfast is their great meal of the day. When the sun rises we are done. I'm sorry I ever made the *Star Shell.*"

"It is Norden we have to thank for this," was all I felt capable of saying.

It was an awful experience—that waiting, helplessly, to be knocked on the head and chewed up by these grunting, drumming horrors. We thought of Dandy and the two Jo-

vians, camping in the forest; of all our friends far away on the Earth; of Professor Norden, safe and sound amongst the civilized people of this strange planet. Would any of them ever know our fate? It was sickening—to have come all this way to die like this—to have achieved a journey such as no other men had ever attempted—and to end as meat for a band of chattering apes.

The short night passed all too quickly. The east began to glow with pale light. The brutes fell silent, looking at their leader, the big old man with the gnarled club.

He got up, walking clumsily on his hind legs, and eyed us both earnestly, much as a purchaser looks over the joints in a butcher's shop.

"It will be your turn first, Harry," groaned Mark. "You have most fat."

"Might as well have a fight for it, Mark," said I. "They haven't troubled to take our guns. Directly he starts the club act, I'm going to make trouble."

The old man picked on me right enough, and swung the big lump of wood in hefty style. I ran in and gave him a dose of lead plumb center, and another, for luck, in the head. He let out a forty-horse-power yell and went down in a heap, nearly knocking me over with his long, whirling arms.

"Back to the wall!" I shouted to Mark. "It will soon be over."

And it would soon have been over, I knew that. They were seven to one, and foaming with rage at the death of their leader. We might have shot two or three more in the scrimmage, but without help our number was called.

I was never more thankful for anything in my life than for the shot that answered mine, and the shout that followed. Another of the great apes fell, screaming horribly, and Dandy was crying: "Lie down flat, you two; quick be!"

We threw ourselves down, and the fierce Blue Ray, emerging from the twilight depths of the forest, swept over us. As its burning, searing beam struck the six apes they yelled in pain and terror, smoke rising from their scorched hide. They took to headlong flight. We were saved.

CHAPTER 14

THE INVISIBLE AIRSHIPS

The sun rose and we got up and went to meet our friends.

"It was a call most close—it was at the moment last," said Prince Danda. "We had great difficulty in the tracing of you, and trouble to approach you without the warning of our coming giving to the apes. But we here are, and all well is, and—and—and——"

"And what in thunder's that?" we cried.

Something strange, scarifyingly mysterious, had passed, and yet nothing that we could see. It began with a growl from the south, a growl that quickly became an increasing roar. It went over us, just about the level of the treetops, with a shrill, demoniac scream that for the moment deafened us. The foliage was beaten hollow in its track as though a gigantic plow had ripped across the forest. The blast of its breath made us stagger, almost threw us to the ground. It died away in a deep, prolonged moan. But nothing visible had gone by.

"What on Earth—I mean, what on Jupiter—was that?" we asked.

"I ought to have warned you that we were near the zone of the intercontinental air-lines," replied Delius. "That was one of our express airships, driven by magnetism."

"But we saw no ship at all!" cried Prince Danda.

"It was not to be expected," was the answer. "Our long distance airships travel at the rate of—I am using your standards of measurement—nearly two thousand miles per hour."

We gasped.

"Give us a chance—give us a rest!" I said. "Get down to something easy. After being nearly made into breakfast, it is time we had some food ourselves—we need it."

The dry, sandy cave seemed a good camping place for folks requiring rest and safety, and we decided to stop there till the following day. The ground was high, and no Red Weed grew near. One of us on guard, with the Blue Ray, would suffice to keep away all intruders.

Mark, after examining the projector of the ray, and learning all about it in a lot of scientific jargon that was above me, kept asking questions about the invisible airships—how many people did they carry, could the crew see where they were going, had they wireless on board, etc.

"In fact, Solitarian," said Delius, smiling, "your thoughts are running on a way of escape from this forest. You do not like the idea of groping along, in daily and nightly peril, for months, perhaps years. Neither do we, especially as the Red Weed grows more thickly toward the center. As you rightly imagine, all our airships carry wireless apparatus to keep the passengers in touch with the rest of our world, and the metal of the vessels can be made transparent at will."

"Then they may have seen us, and help may be coming?"

"If the vessel that just now passed went by so quickly that you could not see it, strangers," said Delius, "it was, of course, going too fast for its crew to see us at all distinctly. They might, perhaps, catch a momentary glimpse of what they would imagine a group of apes. I do not see how any help can come to us, or any news of us reach our people. We can not read thought at a distance; we can not make any kind of wireless apparatus without materials or tools."

"There is nothing for it, Mark, but to plug along," said I, resignedly. "It is rotten luck. We shall all have gray hair when we work our way out of this confounded Red Spot—if ever we do work out."

CHAPTER 15

THE GIGASAURS

We started the following morning, in no very cheerful mood, as anyone can well imagine, to face that 8,000 miles of poisonous weed and strange animals. It was a great come-down for space-travelers who had jumped the empty gulf between the Earth and Jupiter, to have to toil along on foot.

We asked our friends if their airships ever stopped en route.

"Never," said Oberon. "The only thing that could stop them on the journey would be an accident, a failure of the magnetic circuit aboard—and few such accidents have occurred in my lifetime."

He spoke rather boastfully, and I reflected that "pride goeth before a fall." And it did, in more ways than one, the very next day—and fortunately for us, terrible though the disaster was in itself.

Early that morning, soon after we had reached the bank of a wide, swift stream, the forest on our left hand was filled with a sudden hurricane of noise, of screaming and trumpeting. It was as though a great storm were sweeping across the land, breaking the trees, shaking the very ground. Scores of texotis broke from cover and sought the water; groups of chattering apes, huge reptiles that waddled on feet, and other strange

beasts, came out of the undergrowth. They crowded together in the rocky shallows, and none of them seemed to take any notice of us. They were in the grip of fear. The uproar grew, spread, drew nearer.

"Gigasaurs!" cried Oberon. "A herd of them, coming to the river. You have animals similar to them—you call them elephants."

"If those elephants are," said Prince Danda, with jungle memories in his mind, "it is a fix we are in. The herd on the march is resistless, and we are between them and the water they seek."

"Then we had better step on the gas," I said. "The river comes through a narrow place up there, judging by the sound of a fall, and it may be too tight a squeeze for the brutes."

We hustled along as smartly as we could, but it was rough going, and the extra gravitation told on us. Our progress was also impeded by the mob of scared wild animals that kept getting in our way. The deafening noise of the advancing herd grew stronger.

We were still in the open, racing for the shelter of the rock-strewn narrow gully at the foot of the waterfall, when the gigasaurs burst into view. There were scores of them, huge, unwieldy brutes, twice the size of an elephant. They carried long, sharp tusks, but had only short trunks. The forest behind them—trees and bush and Red Weed alike—was trampled flat, as though a great steam-roller had been forced through it.

The foremost animals caught sight of us, and took a positive dislike to our appearance at once. Screaming and trumpeting, shaking the ground with their ponderous feet, they rushed for us at the speed of a racing horse. We dashed on frantically over those few yards of open. No use wasting revolver bullets on those leather skins.

As the others plunged into the shade of the narrow gully, I tripped in a tangle of creeper, and fell, right in the track of the nearest gigasaur. With a shrill peal of triumph he bore down upon me. Struggling to my feet and trying to free myself, I realized that I could not get out of his way. I thought my time had come.

I have given you a bad impression of the Jovians, I am afraid, but I was now to have proof that they did not lack courage—and courage of a very high order, more in Mark's line.

Oberon was the only one who noticed my fall in time, and he acted promptly. He ran back, stood over me, and with the Blue Ray projector poised, waited for the oncoming brute. Waited, risking his life to save me—and all the time his teeth were chattering, his knees shaking, and he was pale with fear.

Luckily, the intense heat of the Blue Ray, concentrated on the gigasaur's face, proved too much for the moving mountain. With a fierce snort he swerved off to cool his heated brow in the stream. So close was the call that his nearest footprint made a deep hole in the turf not a yard from where I fell.

"That was real grit, old chap," I said, as we stumbled onward to the safety of the rocky ravine. I had to help the plucky astronomer along the last bit, so scared and shaken he was.

We were not a moment too soon. My pursuer, having cooled his forehead, set up a terrific trumpeting, and came after us. The rest heard him, knew what he wanted, and followed. It was impossible to go up the waterfall; the sides of the gully were too steep to climb, besides being full of snakes and apes and topped with bushes of Red Weed; and those accursed gigasaurs blocked the way we had come. Fed, and with plenty of water at hand, those cunning mon-

sters actually made camp and waited for us!

"The gigasaurs are noted for keen memories and revengefulness," said Delius. "They will wait a long time now that they have got the idea fixed in their heavy brains."

We had not much left to eat, no chance of game, and few edible roots grew here. It looked very awkward, and then fortune—or rather, misfortune—came to our relief.

CHAPTER 16

THE STORM

About noon a low growl, an increasing roar, came from the north. Another aerial express, we said, tightening up our nerves for the tornado of its unseen passage; but the noise changed as suddenly as it began, became a long-drawn shrieking hiss, and something visible fell slanting from the sky. It struck the ground near the river bank, throwing up dust and stones, and scaring the gigasaurs backward a few yards. It was a long vessel, shaped like a torpedo. Its nose was buried in the ground, its back was broken right across.

"An accident!" cried Delius; and heedless of the mystified animals, we rushed to the scene.

I won't go into details. The air-vessel had carried a crew of four, and ten passengers. They were all dead, killed by the terrific shock of the fall. The inside of the broken vehicle was a shambles.

"It is terrible, this accident, but it brings us help," said Mark. "When the ship fails to arrive at its destination, your people will surely investigate."

"We must have help sooner than that, and more certain," was the answer of Delius, after inspecting the apparatus in the least damaged part of the wreckage. "According to this weather indicator there is a storm raging in the center of the Red Forest. The river may be in flood before morning. Thank the Great Spirit, Solitarians, that the wireless remains in working order. Now I can talk to my friends, and help will reach us not later than the dawn."

He was busy tapping the sending key of the aerial for several minutes, quickly getting an answer, and he kept on as long as possible, though we warned him that the gigasaurs were recovering from their fright and edging nearer.

At last we had to leave the wreck and seek the shelter of the gully once more. A couple of monsters then approached the airship, nosed round it, trampled on it, and finally, getting their huge tusks under it, levered the bigger portion into the river. Then they settled down again to wait.

"I spoke to my father and wife in the city Nadir," Delius told us. "An airship will be despatched for us as soon as a spare one can be found. They were surprized to hear from me, imagining that we had all perished at the hands of the Barbarians. The Barbarians, I am sorry to tell you, have had great successes. They are led by skilled generals. They are near the Isthmus of Cardiac, and once they pass that, the main civilized continent lies open to their advance, with our cities, Zenith and Nadir. Not for two hundred years has the Isthmus of Cardiac been in peril."

"Perhaps, if you were to give us a free hand in the fighting—let us show you how to use your scientific knowledge—we might help you," I said.

The Jovians exchanged glances, and shook their heads, but Oberon remarked: "I wonder. It may be that if we were less humane, less peaceful, we should have more peace. I wonder."

What we began to wonder about in real earnest, even before sunset, was whether we should be alive when help came. The storm broke upon us

with a fury unequaled by anything I ever experienced on Earth. The lightning was a constant blaze of dazzling radiance; the thunder rolled and roared in a continuous volume of sound that made speech impossible; the rain fell in a solid sheet of water, drenching us in a few minutes, bending the stoutest trees; the wind, had we not been in a sheltered nook, would have blown us away like thistledown before a summer gale. Only the gigasaurs, swaying slightly before it, the rain pouring off their hides in cataracts, stood their ground stolidly.

Toward morning the fury of the storm abated and the rain ceased, but a new danger threatened. The river, fed from the water-logged valleys higher up its course, began to swell. The fall spread, thickened, the stream below it widened, encroaching on the narrow space on either side. Trees, boulders, masses of soil and brushwood, the carcasses of animals, were shot over the cascade. The current became a roaring, raging mass of angry foam, visibly widening every moment. Backward and backward to the unclimbable cliffs we were forced, till the flood was at our feet. Below, in the open, waited the herd of gigasaurs. And there was yet, though dawn tinged the sky, no sign of aid.

CHAPTER 17

THE CITY OF TAPERING SPIRES

HIGHER and higher rose the flooded river, rushing over the top of the fall in a solid mass of mud-brown water. It splashed our feet, covered our ankles. We were desperate, on the point of dashing out of the gully and risking the attentions of the gigasaurs, when the airship came, just after sunrise.

The torpedo-shaped vessel swooped down toward us, hovered, and from an opened door amidships let down a light steel ladder. One by one we scrambled up. The ladder was drawn in, the door closed. The airship lifted higher, circled once round the spot, and then put on full speed. Through the transparent metal walls we had a fine view of the land—a land covered with masses of dark brown forest and flaming Red Weed—of the flooded river, and the herd of gigasaurs.

Then, as Jupiter's magnetism seized us in its compelling grip, the forest slid away beneath us, rushing along like a tinted blur. At two thousand miles an hour there was nothing definite to be seen.

"Good-bye to the Red Spot!" we cried, fervently.

The crew of the ship were four only, and there was plenty of space for us in the big room that filled most of the hull. The magnetic motors were out of sight in cabins fore and aft. The Jovians had evidently heard a lot about the Earth and the *Star Shell* from Professor Norden—who, we gathered, had now recovered from his rough landing—and accepted us at once as friends and equals. And when we told them of our experience in the Red Forest, they looked upon us with admiration.

"It was a terrible time for you all," said Ardis, the captain of the ship. "I am glad I reached you when I did. But I am not sure that in coming with me you are not running into peril even worse. As our wireless will tell you, the Barbarians have had great victories. They have learned how to discharge the Green Fire from huge catapults, and once their blazing missiles fall within our forts, the very stones crack and flame. The Green Fire is radio-active; it loosens the atomic energy of matter. Already the enemy are upon the Isthmus of Cardiac, and once they pass it, the city Nadir, the Gate of the West, is at their mercy."

"On our planet," said Mark, "we should not rest on the defensive; we

should attack the Barbarians and cow them into submission. With such a weapon as your Blue Ray, used properly, and a few hints we could give you of our weapons, this could be done. Then the planet would be yours, not theirs."

"*We* shouldn't stand any nonsense," said I; and went on to tell them how we on Earth had dealt with Afghans, Indians, Matabele, Sudanese and others.

"Yours is indeed a bloody history," said Delius, shuddering, "and yet, have we not been in a state of war for centuries? I am afraid there is something in what these strangers say, my friends. It may be that we shall have to lay aside our scruples in order to win a lasting peace."

"There are some in the Great Council who think so," said Ardis. "Tomorrow will be held a most momentous meeting, and the Solitarians will be asked to be present—all excepting Norden. His thoughts have been read, and we know that he is an evil man. He has cast eyes of desire on Briseis, our Queen-Elect; he has been discovered conferring secretly with Barbarian prisoners."

"He has turned out worse even than we thought," said Dandy. "He a prisoner should be. Has he drunk been?"

The Jovians looked at each other furtively, coughed, and actually blushed. Oberon took Mark aside, and speaking with difficulty, informed him that Professor Norden had obtained an intoxicating drink from one of the prisoners.

"Fact is, you fellows," whispered Mark to us, "he has been making an ass of himself with the booze. The Barbarians are as bad as humans for the drink, whilst the civilized race are so horrified at the idea that they flinch from mentioning it. It is not considered a fit subject of decent conversation."

"My stars!" I grunted. "We shall have to be very careful how we talk to these refined folk. They don't eat meat, they don't imbibe beer, they don't kill anything except in self-defense—and then it hurts them. And yet, somehow, I rather like them."

"Same here," added my companions.

The airship, after its swift journey, was slackening its speed. Soon the ground below ceased to be a blur, a streaked gray road, and we saw that we were descending in a long, slanting course over an isthmus between two continents. To north and south lay limitless expanses of silvery sea; below us land stretched out, widening every moment as we left the isthmus behind. Fifty miles inland, as our great momentum spent itself, we dropped gently down toward the glittering spires of a city.

It was a wonderful sight, that city of tapering spires, the city Nadir, at present the capital of the civilized race.

It covered a big area, every house standing in a luxuriant garden of foliage and fruit trees, and gay with flowers; the roads were wide and gently curving highways of a smooth gray substance, busy with auto vehicles of many sorts. No smoke hung in the clear air. As we neared the landing stage—a broad space marked out in geometric lines—and threw the door open, a confused murmur of traffic, mingled with the songs of birds, came up to meet us.

"After the satellite Europa, and the Red Forest, this indeed heaven is!" exclaimed Dandy.

A shout of delight burst from Mark as the airship settled down to its moorings. He pointed to a familiar object not fifty yards away."

"The good old *Star Shell!* We must have a look at her before we run round the city."

We felt comforted, somehow, by the sight of the vehicle that had car-

ried us through the hundreds of millions of miles of space. It was a product of the dear old Earth. It was true we found it broken—cracked from base to apex—but a number of Jovian mechanics were at work upon it already, slowly closing up the fissure, joining the metal walls, fusing them together with a portable electric welding outfit.

"Another day of work, stranger," said one of the mechanics, looking up from the operation, "and your spaceship will be repaired and ready for travel. You must have great courage, to risk so fearful a journey. With us, the journey to Europa seems terrible, and only a few of the astronomers, mad for scientific knowledge, can be found to dare it."

He had spoken as though we were old friends. The wireless had spread the knowledge of us everywhere, it seemed, and these queer people were true gentlemen. Though they must have been very curious about us, they never pressed us with too many questions, and throughout the whole of our stay on Jupiter we were never bothered by crowds of open-mouthed wonder-gazers—as men from Jupiter would have been followed and stared at in the streets of our planet.

On our part we were inquisitive enough, and gladly accepted an invitation to a joy-ride through the city of spires. We were shown the public squares, the baths, the factories where people worked to the strains of music and amongst gay floral decorations, the municipal offices where the supply and demand of all goods and services were regulated, the theaters, and—oh, yes, they have had motion pictures on Jupiter for hundreds of years!—the cinemas, where we saw wonderful pictures in stereoscopic relief, rendered in all the perfect coloring of nature, and with every accompaniment of natural sound.

"If we can only get the secret of these pictures to take back to Earth, that alone will make the trip worth while," said Mark. "And now, what next? I am beginning to enjoy myself at last."

That was what we all felt. We had been through a nerve-racking time, and it was a treat to look on the easy side of things for a change. But we were given little opportunity for mere enjoyment. The Jovian days are short, and no time can be lost if anything is to be accomplished between sunrise and sunset. Delius conducted us to a guest-house, where we had hot baths and good suppers, and were put to bed in swinging hammocks.

(Have I forgotten to mention that the climate of Jupiter, but for the truly terrific storms, is delightful? Though the giant planet is such a long way from the sun, it is kept warm by its own internal heat and the heavy clouds that retain much of the heat. The weather was always that of a mild summer's day.)

"In the morning," said Delius, when he left us in the hall of the guest-house, "you will be summoned to a meeting of the World Council. You have come at a great crisis in our history, with experience from another planet, and our Elders will listen eagerly to your ideas."

CHAPTER 18

THE STOLEN QUEEN

"WE ARE right in the thick of things here," said I, as we entered the council chamber in the great state palace next morning. It was a large room, its center open to the sky. "Fancy insignificant fellows such as we are on Earth, being invited to an all-Jupiter conference! And here's our uninvited pal, Professor Norden—and here is the Queen-Elect. Beautiful, I would say."

Norden strolled in and took a seat in the back row, nodding to us curtly. Evidently he had been well

treated by these over-civilized folk, and in spite of his dreadful habits and his treachery, they allowed him perfect freedom. There was a strained, tense expression on his face, however, quite unusual to him. We wondered at the time, but now we know what it meant. He was trying to control his thoughts, to hide the new mischief at the back of his mind.

But the Queen-Elect, Briseis! I am not much at describing women. It seems they like to have a sort of queen over them on Jupiter, though the civilized race is virtually a free republic, and so every year they elect the finest woman they can find. And finest, with them, means the finest in every way. Briseis, we were told, was the most beautiful, the most physically perfect, and at the same time the best educated, the most brainy and best-willed woman on the planet. She had been elected twice, and with her clear-cut features, ivory skin, dark hair and violet eyes, she looked every inch a queen.

"It is most wonderful here to be," said Dandy. "But when it is over, then to Norden I shall talk strongly!"

The queen came to the state chair and lifted her hand. An instant silence fell on the council of white-haired Elders, and she spoke. It was the most businesslike palaver I have ever been in. No one talked too long, and everyone kept to the point. There were no silly formalities.

"You all know my views, people," said the queen. "I am for the use of unrestricted force. I think our old scruples must go, if we would preserve our race. You, Ostrong, our eldest councilor, will put the other side before us, and then the spokesman of these strangers, these daring visitors from the planet Solitaire, shall speak of their experience."

A fairly tall old man, straight of back, rather shifty of eye and shaky of voice, his head a mop of silver-gray, then stood up. This was Ostrong. Somehow, I didn't cotton to him.

"Elders of Jupiter," he said, "you know my views also. I believe in the old ideas of kindness and mercy. I would long ago have sent home these prisoners you are still keeping near the city. I would still rely on the justice of our cause, on self-defense alone. That One Whom we worship Who has preserved our people through past centuries, will preserve us yet. Let us trust in Him. Let us keep our souls clear of the guilt of shedding innocent blood. Better even to die with untarnished honor than to live at the cost of death and pain to an inferior race. I have spoken."

"Now it is up to you," I whispered, pushing Mark forward. "You are the one to face this sort of music."

This was another case where Mark scored. In front of this calm, sedate assembly of senior wranglers, where I should have felt all the courage oozing out of my boots, he was quite at home.

"Friends," he said, "I believe, as sincerely as you do, in mercy and loving-kindness. I have no desire to kill or injure any living creature needlessly. The best of us on our planet feel like that."

A long, deep murmur of approval from the old gang.

"But," went on my wonderful pal, "on Earth we have a knack of facing realities. We don't see any sense or justice in allowing inferior or savage races to overrun our planet. We think that self-defense includes judicious attack. We prefer a wholesale dose of war now and then, giving us long times of peace, to a constant state of terror. Were this the Earth, and were we of the civilized race, we should make such an onslaught upon the Barbarians that they would not dare to annoy us for a century."

Great applause from the younger element in the council.

"As the civilized race, it is your duty to spread the benefits of civilization over the whole of the planet," pursued Mark, warming to his subject. "Cities and fruitful lands such as this should spread over the whole surface of your globe. The Barbarians should be subjugated, educated by force if need be, exterminated if need be, in the true interests of future generations. It may seem presumptuous on my part, but though we are not so far advanced as you in some ways, I must say that we are more so in others. We can show you methods of destruction that will roll back the Barbarian waves and make you forever secure and dominant. If you will allow us, we will help you."

A scene of enthusiasm followed. It was evident that the new ideas were gaining ground. After more speeches a vote was taken. Every councilor had a small black ball, which he was allowed to drop into one of two glass vessels that were handed round. One vessel was marked "For defense only;" the other, "For attack." Each vessel had an indicator attached, that automatically registered, at any moment, the number of balls within. Delius, after a glance at the two vessels, as they were placed on the table in front of the queen, turned to us excitedly.

"Never have so many of the Elders voted for strong action before!" he cried. "The numbers are equal! The queen has now to cast the deciding vote."

"And she is a woman of sense," said I. "There is no doubt about the result. It looks to me, Mark, that we shall have to get busy soon showing them how to make T. N. T. and long-range guns, and similar triumphs of human progress. Now for the final score."

But that casting vote was never to be given. A shadow fell across the open chamber as an airship sailed slowly over, trailing a fine-meshed net above our heads. Two shots rang out, and the two glass vessels were shattered to fragments, the voting balls spilling on the floor. The queen, in the act of stretching out her hand, gave a startled cry and stepped back in surprize and fear.

"Norden!" shouted Mark. "Hold him!"

The professor, with smoking revolver still in his hand, was at the queen's side before we could reach them. We feared the worst, though Ostrong appeared to be supporting her. In the rush and confusion everybody was in everybody's way, and nobody expected what happened.

The net swinging over our heads fell suddenly and enveloped the Queen. Ostrong, making a pretense of freeing her from its folds, actually drew them closer around her, and Norden managed to pull up the tightening cord before we could reach him. The net was then hauled aloft, and Norden made a spring to go up with it, but I prevented that. I gave him a jolt under the left ear that put him out of action for a spell. He went down like a felled ox, and people gasped.

But the queen, struggling uselessly in the net, was whisked up and drawn into the airship. We had a glimpse of two grinning Barbarians in the doorway of the vessel before the opening was closed and the vehicle sped away eastward.

Ostrong and others shouted orders for instant pursuit. There was a rush for the exits, and then, right across the mêlée, night fell, though it was midday.

"Only an eclipse," said Mark, glancing at the sky. "The first satellite has sailed between us and the sun, that's all. I expect the queen-stealers timed their coup with this in mind. Ah, the lights are on; that's better. It's a bad business."

"Yes, and there are others in it besides Norden," said I. "Ostrong's in it or I'm a Dutchman. I can't read thought, but I can read faces, and that old hypocrite has given himself away. He is a fanatic for the old ideas, and he has used Norden and the Barbarians as his tools. It was a trick to prevent the council coming to a decision. No doubt he had canvassed them all and knew how the vote would go."

"If it for him had not been," said Dandy, "the queen would have escaped the net. I was him watching."

We told Delius and Oberon our suspicions. We were now all out of doors, looking at the last phase of the passing eclipse. Half a dozen airships were rising into the gloomy sky.

Our friends shook their heads.

"It is hard to believe in such treachery," said Oberon. "Of course Ostrong has the power of concealing thought, but we read nothing of such intention in his mind. And now, you see, he is active in organizing pursuit; he also demands a searching enquiry into the terrible affair. If we were a vindictive race, Solitarians, it would go hard with your evil comrade. Our queen is very dear to all of us."

"It is the uncertainty of her fate that pierces my heart," observed Delius. "Why there should be savages at all in the airship is puzzling. They are not clever enough to work the vessel themselves. We do not know whether she is in the hands of Barbarians alone—which I can hardly bear to think about—or is merely being held prisoner somewhere by a mixed crew for a time. Nothing so awful has happened for ages."

By sunset the searching airships returned with a story of failure. They had not been able to find any trace of the vessel that had captured the queen, though they reported great commotion in the Barbarian camp across the isthmus.

But the next day we knew the worst.

CHAPTER 19

THE ULTIMATUM

It was after breakfast next morning that the public enquiry into the abduction of the queen was formally opened in the council chamber. Our astronomer friends were there, ourselves, and even Norden. The professor kept discreetly away from us, though if looks could have killed he would have annihilated us on the spot.

"Old Ostrong seems considerably upset," said I. "What we can't understand, friends, is why you let Norden go about on the loose, knowing what a rotter he is. Why not put him in prison?"

Here I ran up against another snag.

"We do not believe in punishment, in revenge," answered Delius. "We have nothing at all corresponding to your system of prisons and punishments. We could not rest comfortably if we knew that we had shut out our fellows from life and freedom. We hold enquiries merely to discover the truth. When that is known, those who are proved wrong-doers are already punished. Everybody sees them in their true colors. To be a convicted criminal at large is a terrible fate. That being our law, we can not deal differently with strangers. Today we shall get the truth, have no fear of that, and those who have done this great wrong to our ruler will hereafter suffer the double pangs of self-loathing and public contempt."

"Something in the idea," said Mark. "Being sent to Coventry and all that wasn't so very comfortable at school, you know. Still, I would give a good deal to have this case tried at the New Bailey."

"They know what they are about," struck in Prince Danda. "They are going to make Norden speak, and his thoughts read, too. Mr. Ostrong most uncomfortable is already."

The professor, gently forced to the front, could not long withstand the searching cross-examination he was put through. The president of the council, a man named Nesor, was pitiless; his eyes seemed to bore into the traitor's brain. Every plausible excuse Norden made was waved aside, and his thoughts revealed, till at last he broke down and confessed.

"I will tell you all," he said, "and much good may it do you. You won't hurt me, so I don't see why I should conceal anything. It is all Ostrong's doing. He guessed I would assist him in any mischief that would damage these other people from my world and spoil their plans to become your benefactors. He's an old fool of a fanatic for your silly humanitarian ideas, and asked me to help him to prevent the council coming to a decision. I suggested that we seize the queen during the eclipse, and we smuggled a couple of the Barbarian prisoners aboard the airship to overawe the mechanics. We had to act in rather too great a hurry, that's all."

"But where is the queen now? How long is she to remain a captive against her will?" asked Nesor.

"Where she is I am not sure," was the reply. "Our plan was that I should also be taken up with the vessel, but one of my 'friends' prevented that. For all I know, the prisoners may have forced the mechanics to take the airship into their country and deliver her to their people. Long before this a message should have reached you from her."

"And you, Ostrong; what have you to say?"

It seemed to us that a chill fell upon the court.

"This man has played me false also," said the white-haired Elder. "I had not read his thought carefully. I see now that he had planned to take the queen to the Barbarians, to throw in his lot with them and help them against us, in order to get her into his power. More than that, he hoped to enable them to conquer the planet, so that he could prevent these other Solitarians returning to their world. My only desire was to stave off the fatal decision of the council until I could persuade you all to keep to the old ways. I would rather die, I would rather the race perished, than that we lived at the cost of wilful slaughter."

"The silly ass!" I cried. "He doesn't see that he is asking for a wholesale slaughter of his own people."

The Jovians are not built like Earth-folk, however, and it was evident that there was yet a considerable body of opinion in favor of Ostrong's ideas. But everybody shrank away from Norden as if he were a leper, and though he affected an air of bravado, he was obviously uncomfortable.

"I could almost wish he had killed himself in the smash of landing in the *Star Shell*," said Mark. "A nice mess he has made of everything! This planet is no place for us, whilst he is here to spoil things. The sooner the *Shell* is repaired and we make tracks for home, the better. After all, for a first attempt at space-traveling, we have not done so badly. But what's the matter now? The president is on his pins again."

"I have just received a wireless message from the queen," Nesor announced gravely. "The truth confirms our worst fears. The Barbarians on the airship compelled the crew to land the vessel in their camp, and then to go on to their chief town. She is now in the hands of the Barbarian general, Megolof, who went

along with her in the ship. She sends this message:

My people. I am held prisoner by the enemy. My life is to be forfeit if their demands are not granted within ten days. If, at the end of that time, our ships and forces are not withdrawn from the isthmus, leaving it free for their hordes to pass over without resistance, if the secret of the Blue Ray be not given up to them, I must die. I shall die by the slow death of the Green Fire; inch by inch I shall be burned to death. Yet I pray you, my people, not to give way because of me. I am but one, and my life is not worth the lives of the tens of thousands who must die if I am saved. Do not give way; let the strangers from Solitaire help you in the fight, and remember that Briseis died for you. Till we meet in the afterworld, farewell.

"That is the message I have received," ended Nesor.

For a moment there was intense silence in the shocked assembly. If such a thing had been done, such a message received, on Earth, I think that anyone as guilty as Norden and Ostrong would have looked his last at the sky that day.

A murmur, a sound that was the indrawing of many breaths, went round the place, and then Ostrong spoke.

"Blame me who will, this that has happened is not of my desire. I would rather go and give my life for hers than that Briseis should die thus. But my faith in the old ways is strong as ever. There is nothing for us to do but agree to the terms of Megelof. We must surrender the isthmus, give up this city, and retire behind the fortresses of the Ridged Hills."

"But never can we give up the secret of the Blue Ray!" cried several voices. "That would be to leave us helpless."

"Even that," insisted the stubborn old man.

"Come out of it, Mark," said I. "The idiots may argue for hours. Come and have a look at the *Shell*. As you remarked yesterday, this is no world for us."

"I am not so sure, Harry," answered my amazing chum. "I think there is work for us here yet—and work of the sort you ought to like, though it is not quite in my line. Whilst the Jovians are talking, it is up to us to act. We must rescue the queen!"

"Good for you, old boy!" I shouted. "When do we start?"

"As soon as we can persuade them to let us have an airship. It is a desperate venture, I'll admit, but we can't rest till we have had a try. After all, it is because of our friend Norden that that splendid woman is in such deadly peril. Now for a map and a little information."

Delius eagerly procured a large-scale chart, and pointed out Malador, the chief town of the Barbarians. It is distant some 7,000 miles, and about twenty miles from the southern edge of the Great Red Forest.

"We will gladly provide an airship that will get you there in four hours, Solitarians," he said. "But when you land, how are you going to effect a rescue from the midst of the enemy? It seems a fearful undertaking."

"We shall not land at Malador, but in the Red Waste," was Mark's confident reply. "You must procure us dresses such as the Barbarians wear, and so disguised, we shall penetrate their country. What we shall do when we get there, we must leave to the moment. We can only make the effort."

"You have said it, Mark!" I cried. "You are coming out of your shell with a vengeance. I'm on, and so is Dandy, I can see by his face. I thought we had glimpsed the last of that nightmarish Red Forest, but if we have to sample it again, well, we have, that's all."

"I will come, also," said Delius.

"And I," said Astris, the captain of the ship that had saved us from the flooded river.

"And I," said Oberon, "shall stay here to watch over Norden, and also to keep in touch with you by wireless. Much may happen before ten suns have risen and set."

Of course, looking back on it now, I can see it was a mad scheme. There were lots of ways in which the civilized race could have used their wonderful powers if they would. It was simply the first idea that came to mind.

Daylight was fading into twilight as we five, three men of Earth and two of Jupiter, with four mechanics, climbed aboard the airship and waved our hands in farewell to the silent crowd around the landing place. We rose, hovered a few moments, and then plunged eastward into the night at two thousand miles an hour.

Utterly fascinating are the thrilling adventures of the Earthmen against the Green Fire and the Red Weed in their desperate attempt to rescue the queen from the Barbarians, as described in next month's WEIRD TALES.

Yule-Horror

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

There is snow on the ground,
And the valleys are cold,
And a midnight profound
Blackly squats o'er the wold;
But a light on the hilltops half-seen hints of feastings unhallowed and old.

There is death in the clouds,
There is fear in the night,
For the dead in their shrouds
Hail the sun's turning flight,
And chant wild in the woods as they dance round a Yule-altar fungous and white.

To no gale of Earth's kind
Sways the forest of oak,
Where the sick boughs entwined
By mad mistletoes choke,
For these pow'rs are the pow'rs of the dark, from the graves of the lost Druid-folk.

A Tale of the Terror of Night

The Guard's Error

By W. BENSON DOOLING

HIS butler was a monstrous negro who, in his naked feet, stood six feet and six inches tall: he weighed one hundred and ninety pounds. When climatic conditions permitted—and it was seldom cold here—this man walked about, or stood silent guard, nude except for a loin-cloth of purple satin, which was designed with a mosaic of crimson birds and yellow weeds. His features were sharp, and his color, rather than black, was faded, as appear certain chocolate sweets. Always he carried a great simitar of trenchant, shining steel: it lay across his chest even while he slept.

His duties were simple and easily performed, with a certain grace of polished savagery. Through the nights he slept on a low divan, stretched across the bolted door of his master's room. During the day he stood silent, watchful, outside the library door, except during his master's carefully chosen, lengthy meals, when he stood guard behind his chair, and sometimes, of course, when his master desired him with him in the library. On those rare occasions when the echo of the large brass knocker reverberated through the ancestral halls, after a metallic clink of bolts and chains he would swing in the door, his simitar flat across his chest, with its lengthy, delicately rolling muscles, and bow to the visitor with Oriental grace; though at times, perhaps, with a shadow of a smile for the consternation which invariably paled the face of one who looked on him. This man, with his height, his catlike grace, his curved sword, was formidable, and feared. Those several acquaintances of the master of the demesne wondered at his being always there, poised for instant action, striking terror to all who passed the gate, and they saw him standing in the door, or moving beyond the great barred windows which made two-thirds of the sheer front wall. These understood the master's fear of fear, a neurosis which made his waking hours an inferno, and troubled his slumbers with monstrous phantom forms; still they wondered.

Something, the master thought, would one day get to him, and frighten him; and he dreaded the result of the terror he would know.

Visitors were few, and stayed within the confines of the house but a short time. The master was known to be more than a trifle queer: he was, indeed, thought by many to be mad.

In his youth he had experimented, as one with his fabulous wealth could with more or less impunity, with women, liquor, drugs and food. The details of all his indiscretions were not known: and a legend of Satanism and of many perversions had grown, funguslike, about his name. He could not have perpetrated all the deeds attributed to him: no one man could do so in thirty-three years. He was now dyspeptic, neurotic, lean, cadaverous, senile. Some of his nights were somnambulistic: some were troubled with dreams: through many he could

not sleep and tossed in terror on his bed.

Often, through a day, he would sit silent, inert, in an overstuffed green chair (green was one of the several colors his sated eyes could tolerate), alone with his thoughts and fears. Again, in a burst of energy, he would spend hours browsing in elegantly bound and quaintly tooled tomes from his set of the works of Marquis de Sade. He found pleasure in *Justine*, in *Juliette, Les Crimes de l'Amour, Zoloë et ses Deux Acolytes.*

His stomach did not permit him to smoke or drink, and his doctors forbade him, in fear of death or paralysis, all stimulation; and, too, the soporific calm of certain exotic drugs he knew and craved.

THIS morning was murky: a heaviness hung about the window glass, and large gray clouds obscured the sun. The house was hot and sultry. Perspiration rolled in little beads from the armpits of the black.

In his chair, the master, Ronald Arny Smithen, sat and mused. He shivered now and then, despite his heavy lounging robe.

Breakfast finished, nothing remained to be done but to sit here, musing—on the gay days of his youth, on hours of enjoyment, on his small piquant wife, who had left home years before, and on dinner, to be had five hours, five eons, later; which he could hardly enjoy, with his stomach feeling as it did.

A praying mantis hopped to the arm of his chair and fluttered away again, permitting him but a glimpse of its light green body and the two goggle eyes, which had, but for a moment, stared into his own. Smithen jumped from his chair, screaming, and then, exhausted and shivering, sank back into it, pulling his robe about his throat.

"Him on'y little bug," explained the black, from behind his chair: he had entered the room on hearing Smithen scream. "Dey good luck. Dey come to youah house, an' pray: an' ya have goo' luck, Mistah Smithen."

"Aren't they poisonous?" he asked.

"No, dem ain't. We got bugs in ma country what am. Dey lil black bugs, wid speckle backs, what drop on ya, an bite ya, an ya die. . ."

"Shut up! you fool."

"I on'y tell ya, Mistah Smithen. Ya ain't got none like that roun' heah. Nothin', anyhow, can get ya while ah'm heah." The guard laughed lightly, musically.

"I am a nervous fool," said Smithen, to himself. "In five years I haven't been outside this house. Nothing can hurt me, nothing can! . . . Get me a cup of coffee, Ungel, please."

Smithen kept no servants other than this black. Once he had suffered fright, on reading, in a newspaper, of a man, the parson of a church somewhere, who had been poisoned by a maid whom he had told he loved. Smithen trusted none other than this black; and now, as the tall man moved before him, stooping slightly forward, a tiny crescent of steel blade visible over his brown shoulder, he wondered how far this man was his friend. How easily, he mused, could Ungel, from behind his chair, some morning such as this, swing his sword—but once. . . His stomach felt empty: and something reeled in his head. Smithen fell back, fainting, in his chair.

He had waked, though he felt dazed, when Ungel returned with coffee on a tray. He drank it slowly, lingering over each mouthful of the draft and wishing for a cigarette.

Outside, in the sky, a corkscrew of lightning played a moment. Smithen sipped his coffee. Thunder rumbled. He handed the cup to Ungel and rose from his chair. From the window,

he looked out over an expanse of ill-kept lawn to his tall stone wall, with its top inlaid with jagged glass. He looked through the bars of the iron gate, to the lane, rimmed with august verdant trees, which wound to the town. One of his doctors was due this afternoon. How monstrous it would be to go to him instead! Should he take Ungel? No, he decided; he would go alone.

"Ungel," he said, "find me a raincoat, and a leather vest."

"You ain't gwine out?"

"That's just what I'm about to do. Bring me a felt hat, too—something that doesn't look too new."

"But ya might get sca'ed!"

"You'll stay here; and let me in when I return. I may not come back until late this afternoon."

"But it's gwine to rain!"

"Get the things I want. And please be quick."

Ungel left the room.

Strange that the man should remonstrate with him!

Ungel could not know that his master had prepared to compensate him handsomely in his will; that a large share of his goods should go to him, upon his death. So he could not wish to keep him here—to kill him, to slowly poison him. That coffee had had a vicious tang.

The man returned; and carefully helped him dress.

"Bettah let me go along, Mistah Smithen. Ain't no tellin' what might happen on a day like this."

"You're to stay here and see that no one gets in and does mischief while I'm away. You're capable of protecting things, aren't you?" he asked facetiously; perhaps, too, to find the answer to an implication that he did not trust this man implicitly.

"Guess ya know ah am," Ungel smiled. "Ain't I allus done?"

"You're a good boy, Ungel. Now, I'm off."

"Gwine ta town?"

"Yes."

"Bettah walk slowly, Mistah Smithen; and keep to dah centah ob dah road."

"Trust me. But why?"

"Ya might get sca'ed."

"Not much danger. I'm feeling pretty good."

The negro walked to the gate with him, and unlocked it, permitting him to pass.

"You may leave it open, Ungel, until I return; but keep the house-door locked. I'll knock."

Ungel watched his master moving slowly along the road, looking curiously on the growing things, which he had not seen in years. Once he stooped to pat a transient dog.

"I hope nothin' happens to him," mused the guard. "I like dat guy a lot. Ain't he allus done what's right to me; even though he is awful queeah? Dat guy ain't well 'tall! If he doan' come back soon, I go lookin' fo' him, ordahs or no ordahs."

He closed the gate and went into the house, locking and bolting the heavy door.

It was night, and very dark. Only a drizzle fell of that rain which had poured so heavily through the afternoon. On either side of the road tall trees stood like whispering phantoms, as the light rain trembled through their shiny leaves. An owl hooted disconsolately.

Smithen moved quickly in the middle of the road. He was, he thought, but half a mile from his home. It was natural, he knew, for trees to stand like these, even for an owl to hoot, at night.

His visit had not been without result. The doctor had greeted him, amazed; and, after explanation that Smithen hoped to cure himself of fear by such a trip as this, he had insisted that he stay the afternoon with him. They had lunched together,

and, after cards and pleasant talk, they had dined. Then Smithen had started home: he had declined an offer of company, of conveyance home in a motor car. It had been necessary, too, to decline an invitation to stay the night. Nothing, he was sure, could frighten him now.

Ungel, probably, was worried at his absence; but he would reassure him. He would tell him he was free of fear; that fear is a very foolish thing.

Suddenly his sensitive ears detected, far off, the pat of running feet, a nervous light tread, as though those feet were free of boots. Animals, Smithen thought, in forests, must make a noise like this, when hurrying after prey, when hungry, thirsting for blood.

Carefully, his mouth twitching, he meandered toward the roadside, to that lane of ghostly trees.

Hwee, hwee, hwee, hwee, hwee: above him screeched the owl.

Owls, he remembered, played an esoteric part in those Sabbaths of bygone days—when witches on brooms spake in Arabic with the ghosts of pterodactyls, in a leaden sky.

Ever nearing came the thud-thud of hurrying feet: it blended strangely with the discordant screech of the owl, with the patter of the rain, and that night buzz of insects: it was insistent as the beat and echoing beat of a great tom-tom, through a broad wooded space.

Smithen moved a hand across his face; he played his fingers through his sparse hair, throwing his hat to the slimy road. He stooped, to feel about for it. His feet slid out from under him: Smithen fell on his face in a small warm pool. Something cool, and small, with tiny quick legs, touched his hand. He felt the little feet brace and spring; he heard an unassuming croak; the chill little thing had gone.

Hwee, hwee, hwee . . . hwee, hwee . . . hwee, hwee, hwee: the owl chanted to the night, to Smithen, who, bracing himself against the mossy trunk of a tree, which chilled him like a cold plunge some men had made him take during college days, struggled to his knees. . . .

He remembered reading *The Cardinal's Snuff-Box,* years before, in the cloistral quiet of his college library. Came the desire to reread *The Flower Beneath the Foot.* Episodes of his life, things of small import, experienced when he was very young, flashed like quick-changing lantern slides on the canvas of his brain. In a few brief moments he relived scenes of luxury, of joy. . . . his marriage, a honeymoon at Rome; then Venice, Paris, Algiers. . . . women's faces, the faces of youths, childhood faces, faces without form or substance. . . . ethereal things lived and waned in his troubled brain.

Insects seemed to have hushed somewhat their buzz. The owl continued his plaintive wail. Nearer came the thud of feet.

Smithen struggled to his feet. Perspiration froze on his weary body: he was cold, shivering. His eyes could distinguish nothing: they strained in the dark. Like earnest sentinels his ears reported the progress of the running feet, registering an impression magnified and distorted in his mind. Though it seemed eons, Smithen was conscious that but a short time had elapsed since his first hint of those thudding feet: it could not, he knew, have been longer than a brief series of seconds. How often, though, that owl had screeched! There was a turn somewhere beyond him in the road. The feet were there. He could place them now. Louder than before, yet soft and catlike, they were rounding the turn.

Drowning persons, he drearily mused, saw their past life, or scenes from it, in a mental flash. Could it be he was about to die? No!. . . he

(Continued on page 864)

WEIRD STORY REPRINT

No. 18

*The Apparition of Mrs. Veal**

By DANIEL DEFOE

THIS thing is so rare in all its circumstances, and on so good authority, that my reading and conversation has not given me anything like it. It is fit to gratify the most ingenious and serious inquirer. Mrs. Bargrave is the person to whom Mrs. Veal appeared after her death; she is my intimate friend, and I can avouch for her reputation for these last fifteen or sixteen years, on my own knowledge; and I can confirm the good character she had from her youth to the time of my acquaintance. Though, since this relation, she is calumniated by some people that are friends to the brother of Mrs. Veal who appeared, who think the relation of this appearance to be a reflection, and endeavor what they can to blast Mrs. Bargrave's reputation and to laugh the story out of countenance. But the circumstances thereof, and the cheerful disposition of Mrs. Bargrave, notwithstanding the unheard-of ill usage of a very wicked husband, there is not the least sign of dejection in her face; nor did I ever hear her let fall a desponding or murmuring expression; nay, not when actually under her husband's barbarity, which I have been witness to, and several other persons of undoubted reputation.

Now you must know that Mrs. Veal was a maiden gentlewoman of about thirty years of age, and for some years last past had been troubled with fits, which were perceived coming on her by her going off from her discourse very abruptly to some impertinence. She was maintained by an only brother, and kept his house in Dover. She was a very pious woman, and her brother a very sober man to all appearance; but now he does all he can to null and quash the story. Mrs. Veal was intimately acquainted with Mrs. Bargrave from her childhood. Mrs. Veal's circumstances were then mean; her father did not take care of his children as he ought, so that they were exposed to hardships. And Mrs. Bargrave in those days had as unkind a father, though she wanted for neither food nor clothing; whilst Mrs. Veal wanted for both. So that it was in the power of Mrs. Bargrave to be very much her friend in several instances, which mightily endeared Mrs. Veal, insomuch that she would often say, "Mrs. Bargrave, you are not only the best, but the only friend I have in the world; and no circumstances of life shall ever dissolve my friendship." They would often condole each other's adverse fortune, and read together Drelincourt upon *Death*, and other good books; and so, like two Christian friends, they comforted each other under their sorrow.

*A true relation of the apparition of one Mrs. Veal the next day after her death to one Mrs. Bargrave at Canterbury the 8th of September, 1705, by Daniel Defoe.

Some time after, Mr. Veal's friends got him a place in the custom-house at Dover, which occasioned Mrs. Veal, by little and little, to fall off from her intimacy with Mrs. Bargrave, though there was never any such thing as a quarrel; but an indifferency came on by degrees, till at last Mrs. Bargrave had not seen her in two years and a half, though above a twelvemonth of the time Mrs. Bargrave had been absent from Dover, and this last half-year has been in Canterbury about two months of the time, dwelling in a house of her own.

In this house, on the eighth of September last, viz., 1705, she was sitting alone in the forenoon, thinking over her unfortunate life, and arguing herself into a due resignation to Providence, though her condition seemed hard: "And," said she, "I have been provided for hitherto, and doubt not but I shall be still, and am well satisfied that my afflictions shall end when it is most fit for me." And then took up her sewing work, which she had no sooner done but she hears a knocking at the door; she went to see who it was there, and this proved to be Mrs. Veal, her old friend, who was in a riding habit. At that moment of time the clock struck 12 at noon.

"Madam," says Mrs. Bargrave, "I am surprized to see you, you have been so long a stranger;" but told her she was glad to see her, and offered to salute her, which Mrs. Veal complied with, till their lips almost touched, and then Mrs. Veal drew her hand across her own eyes, and said, "I am not very well," and so waived it. She told Mrs. Bargrave she was going on a journey, and had a great mind to see her first. "But," says Mrs. Bargrave, "how came you to take a journey alone? I am amazed at it, because I know you have so fond a brother." "Oh," says Mrs. Veal, "I gave my brother the slip, and came away, because I had so great a mind to see you before I took my journey."

So Mrs. Bargrave went in with her into another room within the first, and Mrs. Veal sat herself down in an elbow chair, in which Mrs. Bargrave was sitting when she heard Mrs. Veal knock. "Then," says Mrs. Veal, "my dear friend, I am come to renew our old friendship again, and to beg your pardon for my breach of it; and if you can forgive me, you are one of the best of women." "Oh," says Mrs. Bargrave, "don't mention such a thing; I have not had an uneasy thought about it. I can easily forgive it." "What did you think of me?" says Mrs. Veal. Says Mrs. Bargrave, "I thought you were like the rest of the world, and that prosperity had made you forget yourself and me."

Then Mrs. Veal reminded Mrs. Bargrave of the many friendly offices she did her in former days, and much of the conversation they had with each other in the time of their adversity; what books they read, and what comfort in particular they received from Drelincourt's *Book of Death*, which was the best, she said, on that subject was ever wrote. She also mentioned Dr. Sherlock, and two Dutch books, which were translated, wrote upon death, and several others. But Drelincourt, she said, had the clearest notions of death and of the future state of any who have handled that subject. Then she asked Mrs. Bargrave whether she had Drelincourt. She said, "Yes." Says Mrs. Veal, "Fetch it." And so Mrs. Bargrave goes upstairs and brings it down. Says Mrs. Veal, "Dear Mrs. Bargrave, if the eyes of our faith were as open as the eyes of our body, we should see numbers of angels about us for our guard. The notions we have of Heaven now are nothing like what it is, as Drelincourt says; therefore be comforted under your afflictions, and believe that the Almighty has a particular regard to you, and that your afflictions are marks of God's favor; and when

they have done the business they were sent for, they shall be removed from you. And believe me, my dear friend, believe what I say to you, one minute of future happiness will infinitely reward you for all your sufferings. For I can never believe" (and claps her hand upon her knee with a great deal of earnestness, which, indeed, ran through all her discourse) "that ever God will suffer you to spend all your days in this afflicted state. But be assured that your afflictions shall leave you, or you them, in a short time." She spake in that pathetical and heavenly manner that Mrs. Bargrave wept several times, she was so deeply affected with it.

Then Mrs. Veal mentioned Doctor Horneck's *Ascetic,* at the end of which he gives an account of the lives of the primitive Christians. Their pattern she recommended to our imitation, and said, "Their conversation was not like this of our age. For now," says she, "there is nothing but frothy vain discourse, which is far different from theirs. Theirs was to edification, and to build one another up in the faith, so that they were not as we are, nor are we as they are. But," said she, "we might do as they did; there was a hearty friendship among them; but where is it now to be found?" Says Mrs. Bargrave, "It is hard indeed to find a true friend in these days." Says Mrs. Veal, "Mr. Norris has a fine copy of verses, called *Friendship in Perfection,* which I wonderfully admire. Have you seen the book?" says Mrs. Veal. "No," says Mrs. Bargrave, "but I have the verses of my own writing out." "Have you?" says Mrs. Veal; "then fetch them;" which she did from above stairs, and offered them to Mrs. Veal to read, who refused, and waived the thing, saying holding down her head would make it ache; and then desired Mrs. Bargrave to read them to her, which she did. As they were admiring *Friendship,* Mrs. Veal said, "Dear Mrs. Bargrave, I shall love you forever." In the verses there is twice used the word "Elysium." "Ah!" says Mrs. Veal, "these poets have such names for Heaven." She would often draw her hand across her own eyes, and say, "Mrs. Bargrave, don't you think I am mightily impaired by my fits?" "No," says Mrs. Bargrave: "I think you look as well as ever I knew you."

After all this discourse, which the apparition put in words much finer than Mrs. Bargrave said she could pretend to, and was much more than she can remember—for it can not be thought that an hour and three-quarters conversation could all be retained, though the main of it she thinks she does—she said to Mrs. Bargrave she would have her write a letter to her brother, and tell him she would have him give rings to such and such; and that there was a purse of gold in her cabinet, and that she would have two broad pieces given to her cousin Watson.

Talking at this rate, Mrs. Bargrave thought that a fit was coming upon her, and so placed herself in a chair just before her knees, to keep her from falling to the ground, if her fits should occasion it; for the elbow-chair, she thought, would keep her from falling on either side. And to divert Mrs. Veal, as she thought, she took hold of her gown-sleeve several times, and commended it. Mrs. Veal told her it was a scoured silk, and newly made up. But, for all this, Mrs. Veal persisted in her request, and told Mrs. Bargrave she must not deny her. And she would have her tell her brother all their conversation when she had an opportunity. "Dear Mrs. Veal," says Mrs. Bargrave "this seems so impertinent that I can not tell how to comply with it; and what a mortifying story will our conversation be to a young gentleman."

"Well," says Mrs. Veal, "I must not be denied." "Why," says Mrs. Bargrave, "it is much better, methinks, to do it yourself." "No," says Mrs. Veal; "though it seems impertinent to you now, you will see more reason for it hereafter." Mrs. Bargrave, then, to satisfy her importunity, was going to fetch a pen and ink, but Mrs. Veal said, "Let it alone now and do it when I am gone; but you must be sure to do it;" which was one of the last things she enjoined her at parting, and so she promised her.

Then Mrs. Veal asked for Mrs. Bargrave's daughter. She said she was not at home. "But if you have a mind to see her," says Mrs. Bargrave, "I'll send for her." "Do," says Mrs. Veal; on which she left her, and went to a neighbor's to send for her; and by the time Mrs. Bargrave was returning, Mrs. Veal was got without the door in the street, in the face of the beast-market, on a Saturday (which is market-day), and stood ready to part as soon as Mrs. Bargrave came to her. She asked her why she was in such haste. She said she must be going, though perhaps she might not go her journey till Monday; and told Mrs. Bargrave she hoped she should see her again at her cousin Watson's before she went whither she was agoing. Then she said she would now take leave of her, and walked from Mrs. Bargrave, in her view, till a turning interrupted the sight of her, which was three-quarters after 1 in the afternoon.

MRS. VEAL died the seventh of September, at 12 o'clock at noon, of her fits, and had not above four hours' senses before her death, in which time she received the sacrament. The next day after Mrs. Veal's appearing, being Sunday, Mrs. Bargrave was mightily indisposed with a cold and a sore throat, that she could not go out that day; but on Monday morning she sends a person to Captain Watson's to know if Mrs. Veal were there. They wondered at Mrs. Bargrave's inquiry, and sent her word she was not there, nor was expected. At this answer, Mrs. Bargrave told the maid she had certainly mistook the name or made some blunder. And though she was ill, she put on her hood and went herself to Captain Watson's, though she knew none of the family, to see if Mrs. Veal was there or not. They said they wondered at her asking, for that she had not been in town; they were sure, if she had, she would have been there. Says Mrs. Bargrave, "I am sure she was with me on Saturday almost two hours." They said it was impossible, for they must have seen her if she had.

In comes Captain Watson, while they were in dispute, and said that Mrs. Veal was certainly dead, and her escutcheons were making. This strangely surprized Mrs. Bargrave, who went to the person immediately who had the care of them, and found it true. Then she related the whole story to Captain Watson's family; and what gown she had on, and how striped; and that Mrs. Veal told her it was scoured. Then Mrs. Watson cried out, "You have seen her indeed, for none knew but Mrs. Veal and myself that the gown was scoured." And Mrs. Watson owned that she described the gown exactly; "for," said she, "I helped her to make it up." This Mrs. Watson blazed all about the town, and avouched the demonstration of truth of Mrs. Bargrave's seeing Mrs. Veal's apparition. And Captain Watson carried two gentlemen immediately to Mrs. Bargrave's house to hear the relation from her own mouth. And then it spread so fast that gentlemen and persons of quality, the judicious and skeptical part of the world, flocked in upon her, which at last became such a task that she was forced to go out of the way; for they were in general extremely

satisfied of the truth of the thing, and plainly saw that Mrs. Bargrave was no hypochondriac, for she always appears with such a cheerful air and pleasing mien that she has gained the favor and esteem of all the gentry, and it is thought a great favor if they can but get the relation from her own mouth. I should have told you before that Mrs. Veal told Mrs. Bargrave that her sister and brother-in-law were just come down from London to see her. Says Mrs. Bargrave, "How came you to order matters so strangely?" "It could not be helped," said Mrs. Veal. And her brother and sister did come to see her, and entered the town of Dover just as Mrs. Veal was expiring. Mrs. Bargrave asked her whether she would not drink some tea. Says Mrs. Veal, "I do not care if I do; but I'll warrant this mad fellow"—meaning Mrs. Bargrave's husband—"has broke all your trinkets." "But," says Mrs. Bargrave, "I'll get something to drink in for all that;" but Mrs. Veal waived it, and said, "It is no matter; let it alone;" and so it passed.

All the time I sat with Mrs. Bargrave, which was some hours, she recollected fresh sayings of Mrs. Veal. And one material thing more she told Mrs. Bargrave, that old Mr. Breton allowed Mrs. Veal ten pounds a year, which was a secret, and unknown to Mrs. Bargrave till Mrs. Veal told it to her.

Mrs. Bargrave never varies in her story, which puzzles those who doubt of the truth, or are unwilling to believe it. A servant in a neighbor's yard adjoining to Mrs. Bargrave's house heard her talking to somebody an hour of the time Mrs. Veal was with her. Mrs. Bargrave went out to her next neighbor's the very moment she parted with Mrs. Veal, and told what ravishing conversation she had with an old friend, and told the whole of it. Drelincourt's *Book of Death* is, since this happened, bought up strangely. And it is to be observed that, notwithstanding all this trouble and fatigue Mrs. Bargrave has undergone upon this account, she never took the value of a farthing, nor suffered her daughter to take anything of anybody, and therefore can have no interest in telling the story.

But Mr. Veal does what he can to stifle the matter, and said he would see Mrs. Bargrave; but yet it is certain matter of fact that he has been at Captain Watson's since the death of his sister, and yet never went near Mrs. Bargrave; and some of his friends report her to be a great liar, and that she knew of Mr. Breton's ten pounds a year. But the person who pretends to say so has the reputation of a notorious liar among persons which I know to be of undoubted repute. Now, Mr. Veal is more a gentleman than to say she lies, but says a bad husband has crazed her; but she needs only present herself, and it will effectually confute that pretense. Mr. Veal says he asked his sister on her death-bed whether she had a mind to dispose of anything. And she said no. Now what the things which Mrs. Veal's apparition would have disposed of were so trifling, and nothing of justice aimed at in their disposal, that the design of it appears to me to be only in order to make Mrs. Bargrave so to demonstrate the truth of her appearance as to satisfy the world of the reality thereof as to what she had seen and heard, and to secure her reputation among the reasonable and understanding part of mankind. And then, again, Mr. Veal owns that there was a purse of gold; but it was not found in her cabinet, but in a combbox. This looks improbable; for that Mrs. Watson owned that Mrs. Veal was so very careful of the key of her cabinet that she would trust nobody with it; and if so, no doubt she would

not trust her gold out of it. And Mrs. Veal's often drawing her hands over her eyes, and asking Mrs. Bargrave whether her fits had not impaired her, looks to me as if she did it on purpose to remind Mrs. Bargrave of her fits, to prepare her not to think it strange that she should put her upon writing to her brother, to dispose of rings and gold, which looked so much like a dying person's bequest; and it took accordingly with Mrs. Bargrave as the effect of her fits coming upon her, and was one of the many instances of her wonderful love to her and care of her, that she should not be affrighted, which, indeed, appears in her whole management, particularly in her coming to her in the daytime, waiving the salutation, and when she was alone; and then the manner of her parting, to prevent a second attempt to salute her.

Now, why Mr. Veal should think this relation a reflection—as it is plain he does, by his endeavoring to stifle it—I can not imagine; because the generality believe her to be a good spirit, her discourse was so heavenly. Her two great errands were, to comfort Mrs. Bargrave in her affliction, and to ask her forgiveness for her breach of friendship, and with a pious discourse to encourage her. So that, after all, to suppose that Mrs. Bargrave could hatch such an invention as this, from Friday noon to Saturday noon—supposing that she knew of Mrs. Veal's death the very first moment—without jumbling circumstances, and without any interest, too, she must be more witty, fortunate, and wicked, too, than any indifferent person, I dare say, will allow. I asked Mrs. Bargrave several times if she was sure she felt the gown. She answered, modestly, "If my senses be to be relied on, I am sure of it." I asked her if she heard a sound when she clapped her hand upon her knee. She said she did not remember she did, and she said she appeared to be as much a substance as I did who talked with her. "And I may," said she, "be as soon persuaded that your apparition is talking to me now as that I did not really see her; for I was under no manner of fear, I received her as a friend, and parted with her as such. I would not," says she, "give one farthing to make anyone believe it; I have no interest in it; nothing but trouble is entailed upon me for a long time, for aught that I know; and, had it not come to light by accident, it would never have been made public." But now she says she will make her own private use of it, and keep herself out of the way as much as she can; and so she has done since. She says she had a gentleman who came thirty miles to her to hear the relation; and that she had told it to a roomful of people at a time. Several particular gentlemen have had the story from Mrs. Bargrave's own mouth.

This thing has very much affected me, and I am as well satisfied as I am of the best-grounded matter of fact. And why we should dispute matter of fact, because we can not solve things of which we can have no certain or demonstrative notions, seems strange to me; Mrs. Bargrave's authority and sincerity alone would have been undoubted in any other case.

UTTER strangeness has been the key-note of those stories in WEIRD TALES that have leaped into the forefront of popularity; that is, those stories that have evoked the greatest numbers of enthusiastic letters from you, the readers. And it is such stories that the editors of this magazine are always looking for—stories that have an entirely new twist, and are distinctively told; highly imaginative stories that thrill and convince the reader even when they deal with things that are ordinarily considered impossible; in other words, the stories in this magazine that have gripped your interest to such an extent as to fill the editor's mail with letters of fervid praise are utterly different from the stories that you read elsewhere.

Joseph J. Josephs, of Chicago, asks: "What are the seven most popular stories ever printed in WEIRD TALES, and what is the secret of the extraordinary favor they have found with the readers?"

To understand their popularity, one has only to read them. Each one is distinctively different. The seven most popular stories ever printed in WEIRD TALES, up to and including the July issue of this year, are as follows. *When the Green Star Waned,* by Nictzin Dyalhis; this story dealt with the subjugation of the Earth by evil beings from the dark side of the Moon, whose natures were so discordant that they were driven into frenzy by harmony, and pursued the *aethir-torps* of the other planets into outer space, where they were annihilated. Truly a strange tale, and well deserving the primacy which you, the readers, have accorded it. *The Outsider,* by H. P. Lovecraft; this very short tale deals with a ghoul that crept out of the tomb, and is written from the viewpoint of the ghoul, and sympathizing with the ghoul; a masterpiece of imaginative artistry. *The Ghosts of Steamboat Coulee,* by Lieutenant Arthur J. Burks; this is not the old-fashioned type of ghost-story, for the ghosts talk and act like real people, and re-enact their crimes to the stunned horror of the spectator whom they have lured to their cabin. *The Eternal Conflict,* by Nictzin Dyalhis; a brilliant novelette of cosmic spaces and titanic forces; a herculean story, with a gigantic conflict between Prince Lucifer and the Shining One. *Whispering Tunnels,* by Stephen Bagby; a tale of the World War, and the familiars that haunt the tunnels under Verdun; a tale of terror and horror, blending present-day interest and medieval devil-worship. *Spider-Bite,* by Robert S. Carr; a tale of great white Egyptian tomb-spiders, and a mummy brought to life after thousands of years in the tomb. *The Werewolf of Ponkert,* by H. Warner Munn; a werewolf story written *by the werewolf,* and sympathizing with the werewolf instead of with his victims—a unique tale indeed.

These are not necessarily the best stories that WEIRD TALES has printed, but they are the stories that have achieved the greatest popularity. And their success with you, the readers, heartens us to continue our policy of printing utterly strange stories, such as you can not get in any other magazine in the world. The steadily increasing sales of this magazine, and the firm success that it has already gained, confirm our belief that readers welcome originality in the stories they read, for a truly different story is a tonic to the mind, amid the welter of commonplace tales on the market today.

Rita Torres, of Los Angeles, writes to The Eyrie: "Like many other readers of WEIRD TALES, I am uninterested in ordinary fiction, but like to read of the manifestations of things so-called strange and unusual. I am a new reader of your magazine, having begun with the September issue, and it is a pleasure to find a magazine devoted exclusively to this type of stories."

Writes Hermann Spencer, of Bennington, Vermont: "I have just finished *Fettered,* by Greye La Spina. I think this is about the weirdest tale I ever read, except *The House of Horror,* by Seabury Quinn. I have read other stories that were imaginative, but WEIRD TALES has them beaten by a mile."

"Why don't you have a column of 'True Weird Experiences'?" suggests Morris Joseph, of Philadelphia. "I think plenty of your readers have had weird experiences which would be interesting to read."

"I am an ardent fan of pseudo-scientific tales," writes John Carter Murphy, of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in a letter to The Eyrie. "During the past two or three years I have been collecting this sort of fiction, and let me tell you I am a great admirer of those in WEIRD TALES."

"I get a big kick out of stories like *Across Space,*" writes Charles A. Readinger, of Cleveland, Ohio. "The deductions seem so plausible that you almost believe the stories true. *Across Space* gets all my votes."

Writes Joseph D. Johnson, of Canton, South Dakota: "It is not often that I write to the editors of a magazine to tell them what I think of it, but when I read a number as full of good things as your latest issue, I just can't keep still about it. What I want in your magazine is tales that are weird and wonderful, yet told so as to *seem* real. This is a hard thing to do, but some of your writers do it surpassingly well. One of the best stories I have read recently was *The Woman of the Wood,* by A. Merritt, in the August number."

J. J. Luby, of Elkridge, Maryland, writes to The Eyrie: "After reading the September issue of WEIRD TALES, I just had to surrender myself to the task of giving praise where praise is due. I think Everil Worrell almost outdid herself when she gave us *The Bird of Space,* which is superb. Seabury Quinn's *Ancient Fires* is weirdly wonderful; and last but not least, Edmond Hamilton's thrilling serial *Across Space.*"

Writes C. D. Pieno, of Fredericksburg, Virginia: "I have been reading your magazine for a long time, and it is no more than right that I should write and tell you how pleased I am with it. I certainly thank the day that I chanced to pick up my first copy of WEIRD TALES, and I have been reading it ever since. I have kept all my back copies, and read them over and over again, for they are a gold mine of reading matter. But of all your wonderful authors, I think your best one is Seabury Quinn—he is a writer without a peer."

"I am a chronic reader and buy many magazines, but WEIRD TALES is BEST, with capitals a foot high," writes Richard W. Sargent. "There is

only one way to improve your magazine, and that is to give us more pseudo-scientific tales, especially astronomical. *Across Space* is a story that can't be beaten, and so is *The Bird of Space*. As long as this kind of stories appears in your magazine, WEIRD TALES will be my boon companion."

"I hope you have some more stories soon from Eli Colter and Seabury Quinn," writes Margaret Harper, of Claymont, Delaware. "I admire their style of writing very much. That was a thrilling sequel to the story about the bird of space. But I think the best story in the October issue was *The Supreme Witch*—a wonderful story."

Writes Robert Ware, of Centerville, Iowa: "I have been reading your magazine for over a year and I find it the most fascinating periodical on the market. I think *The Woman of the Wood* is the best story for months, but *The Supreme Witch* in the October issue takes its place with my favorites in my literary scrapbook. I notice the readers do not make any comment in The Eyrie on the poems which appear in each issue; but I find in each one a story that could not be told in prose, and I wish you would use more of them."

Charles Godfrey Osgood, of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, writes: "I have been a reader of W. T. since its advent, and I wish to say that the October number is the best yet. The cover design itself reflects this excellence, and certainly is an improvement. As for the stories, they were of such uniform excellence and value that it is almost impossible to pick a favorite. However, I suppose that distinction might as well go to G. Appleby Terrill's story of *The Supreme Witch*. Some title, that!"

Your votes have given first place, among the stories in the October issue, to *The Supreme Witch*, G. Appleby Terrill's romantic story of witchcraft in England in the Seventeenth Century; with *Cattle of Furos*, Everil Worrell's interplanetary story, a close second. What is your favorite story in the present issue?

MY FAVORITE STORIES IN THE DECEMBER WEIRD TALES ARE:

Story	Remarks
(1)----------	----------
(2)----------	----------
(3)----------	----------

I do not like the following stories:

(1)---------- Why? ----------

(2)---------- ----------

It will help us to know what kind of stories you want in Weird Tales if you will fill out this coupon and mail it to The Eyrie, Weird Tales, 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.

Reader's name and address:

The Metal Giants

(Continued from page 738)

Lanier jerked with astonishment, for the thing was a mighty wheel, a wheel that must have been at least fifty feet taller than even the immense fighting-machines, whose huge, shining spokes and broad, point-studded rim were of smooth metal, and at the hub of which swung a square, boxlike structure of the same material.

Again the whistling signal of the nearer fighting-machine ripped the silence, and now it was answered from far away, toward the east. Lanier looked and saw, in surprize, four others of the metal giants, very far away, hurrying across the hills toward the basin, with mighty, whirling steps. The four that had been left at Stockton, coming at the summons of the metal brain, for what? Aid, battle—that mighty wheel, a foe of the metal brain—then, who——?

"Detmold!" Lanier's cry was like a trumpet call, a scream of comprehension and gladness and faith. "Detmold!" He had constructed the wheel to crush the metal brain and its minions, had built it up, using the tentacle-machines as his own tools, controlling then in the way he had thought, fighting the metal brain with the instruments of its own making.

And now the great wheel was slowly rolling down the slope toward the outermost metal giant. There was no sound to indicate the source of the wheel's motive power, but Lanier little doubted that Detmold had seized and utilized the same secret of atomic power that had been used by the brain for its own creatures. Slowly, almost clumsily, the wheel lumbered down to the basin, until it was but a few hundred feet above the outer fighting-machine. Suddenly the inaction of the latter ended and one long arm flashed out, holding a globe from which the deadly gas spurted toward the hub of the wheel.

With unexpected, lightning rapidity, the larger machine swerved to one side, then, pivoting instantly, rolled with terrific speed and power toward the erect giant, striking it with a deafening crash. The fighting-machine went down, and as the huge wheel rolled over it there was a cracking of metal, and the thing lay broken and harmless.

Over in the east the four approaching fighting-machines were striding toward the basin with utmost speed, screaming their signals, that were answered by the metal giant left functioning in the basin, that stood beside the brain and its platform. And it was toward this remaining enemy that the wheel advanced, slowly, cautiously, edging forward like a snake that can strike with lightning speed. It followed a course that circled with the edge of the basin, and as it passed near Lanier, he saw the tiny figure of a man at the box-structure at the hub, saw Detmold, intent on the control of the giant mechanism; and then the wheel had rolled past him and was moving slowly toward the metal platform and the fighting giant beside it.

On it went, until it was very near the monster machine there, then paused, twisting, hovering, turning. Flash!—and it had struck at the watchful giant, struck and missed, since the thing had turned in time to avoid the impact. Instantly the wheel turned and struck again, and Lanier cried out to see it crash squarely into the fighting-machine. But the latter was not overturned. It braced itself to stand and wound its mighty arms around the spokes of the wheel in a great effort to hold it back from the platform and the brain. The hurrying metal giants in the east were very near now, striding almost

into the basin, racing madly toward this combat of titans. And on the metal circle rested the brain, its lens-eyes turned toward the battle, directing the efforts of its creatures as they battled and hurried in its behalf.

The long arms were still twisting through the spokes of the wheel, that was still striving to reach the near-by platform. Suddenly one of those arms released its hold on a spoke and swept up to the hub, caught the tiny figure of the man there and hurled him toward the edge of the basin, where Lanier saw him strike a tree there. And at the sight, Lanier screamed, ran forward with fists clenched, shouting insane, childish threats, an ant beside the two battling giants. But now, without the controlling hand of its builder, the wheel was whirling, toppling, falling, crashing down onto the circular platform, smashing fighting-machine and metal brain beneath its mighty bulk, crushing both into a twisted heap of metal.

Crash!—and Lanier stood quite still. Over at the eastern edge of the basin the four metal giants had suddenly slumped down and lay motionless, sunken into heaps of cold, lifeless metal, as also must have done all those other metal giants that were spreading terror at Wheeling, as all the creatures of the metal brain must have done when released from its commands by its shattering. Truly, Detmold had struck at the center, had smashed completely the dreadful menace that was his own creature. In awe and wonder, in swiftly flooding thankfulness and gratitude, Lanier looked about. All around was silence.

9

THE face of Detmold was very peaceful when Lanier found him, huddled at the foot of a great tree. It was as if, at the very moment of

(Continued on page 863)

MIDGET NAME CARDS
Trade Mark. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.
THE LATEST NOVELTY 50c. Per Book
Each book contains 50 perfect little name cards, size 1¾x¾, in genuine leather case. Choice of black, tan, green or red. A perfect name card. Name in Old English type. Price complete 50c. Send stamps, coin or money order. Satisfaction guaranteed or money refunded. *Agents Wanted.*
MIDGET CARD SHOP
56 S. Second Street., Harrisburg, Pa.

Make'Em Laff $1.69
Protect yourself against hold-up, rowdies, etc., with this clever cigarette case of light weight metal. Looks exactly like the real thing! Pull the trigger, back flies the lid showing your cigarettes. Lots of fun scaring your friends, and a great protector. Sold exclusively by us. PAY POSTMAN $1.69 on delivery plus postage. Money back if not satisfied. CONSUMERS CO. Dept. 48A, 24 W. 28th St., N. Y.
Patented

TEXAS 38 CAL. RANGER
ALL Prices Smashed!! CUT TO 9.25
Buy now and save 50 percent. Newest model, case hardened frame, blue, 6-inch barrel, with side rod ejector, with special handles, used by every one-punch hero because of accuracy, dependability. SEND NO MONEY. Pay postman on delivery $9.25, plus postage. Money back guarantee. Federal Mail Order Corp. 561 Broadway, New York. Dept. X-110

SONG POEM WRITERS
SEND FOR MY PROPOSITION
RAY HIBBELER
D-50, 2104 N. Keystone Av., Chicago

MAGIC Dice, $5.00; Cards, $1.25; Inks, $1.50; Magic Fluid for Transparents, $3.00; Slick Ace Cards, $1.25; Factory Readers, $1.00. Sales Boards, etc.
CENTRAL NOVELTY COMPANY
112 N. La Salle Street, Chicago, Ill.

TOBACCO Or Snuff Habit Cured Or No Pay
Any form, cigars, cigarettes, pipe, chewing or snuff. Full treatment sent on trial. Harmless. Costs $1.50 if it cures, nothing if it fails. Used by over 500,000 Men and Women. Superba Co. ST-17 Baltimore, Md.

BOOKS, MAGIC, MYSTERIES, MAGIC TRICKS, Novelties. Catalogue free. SINGER, 1212 Hancock, Wisconsin.

4 or 6" Barrel
6-Shot Finest Long Range Revolver
Cut to $6.25
This gun "free" if you can beat our price anywhere—4 or 6 in. barrel, blue or nickel—32, 38-or 22 caliber. Powerful, accurate, hard hitting. Money back guarantee. Pay on delivery $6.25. Federal Mail Order, 561 Broadway, New York, Dept. X-110

FINAL SALE
KING OF REVOLVERS
CUT TO $8.98
Has all improvements of latest guns. $18 value, left wheeler, safety hand ejector, guaranteed never out of order, 6-shot, 32 20 or 38 cal. Send No Money. Pay on delivery $8.98 plus postage. Satisfaction or money back. FEDERAL MAIL ORDER, 561 Broadway, New York Dept. 6-110

QUICK PEP in 20 Minutes

Get New "PEP" In 20 Minutes

Send right now for Super Tabs, the most amazing quick acting "PEP" producing tablet that has ever been created. Absolutely pure—no harmful or habit forming drugs. Yet contains the most marvelous element in all nature for a quick "Pick-up" of VIGOR, STRENGTH, VITALITY.

$1 cash or money order or $1.25 for 2 packages, Guaranteed or Your Money Back

SUPER PRODUCTS CO. Dept. 8, 220 Third Street BROOKLYN, N. Y.

GET THIS 25 CAL. GUN

Vest pocket, Blue Steel Automatic; 7 shot; 1926 model; shoots standard ammunition. Satisfaction Guaranteed or money refunded. Pay as Delivery Plus Postage. SEND NO MONEY.

$6.95

EDWARD IMPORT TRADING CORP.
258 Broadway Dept. C-5 New York

PIMPLES

cleared up—often in 24 hours. To prove you can be rid of pimples, blackheads, acne eruptions on the face or body, barbers' itch, eczema, enlarged pores, oily or shiny skin, simply send me your name and address today — no cost — no obligation. CLEAR-TONE tried and tested in over 100,000 cases—used like toilet water—is simply magical in prompt results. You can repay the favor by telling your friends; if not the loss is mine. WRITE TODAY

E. S. GIVENS, 466 Chemical Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

BIRTH CONTROL!

3 BOOKS-2.39

Don't take foolish chances and suffer later. Learn the real facts about Birth Control and Sex Life. Read Dr. Armitage's famous book. Tells simply and clearly all you should know about Birth Control, Too Many Children, Facts for the Married, Childbirth, etc. Over 300 pp., cloth bound. Real information.

TOO MANY CHILDREN?

In addition we will give absolutely FREE 2 startling books Margaret Sanger's "What Every Woman Should Know." Also "Aspects On Birth Control." Order at once.

SEND NO MONEY. Pay the postman only $2.39 plus postage when these three valuable books arrive.

GUIDE PUBLISHING CO., 228 W. 34th St., N. Y., Studio 411

KNOW!-DON'T TAKE CHANCES

SEX EXPLAINED! BIRTH CONTROL

Sex Truth at last. "THE SCIENCE OF A NEW LIFE." Dr. Cowan's book answers in plain language all you want to know. Explains The Sex Appeal. Choosing a Mate. Birth Control.—Blissful Marriage.—HOW BABIES ARE CONCEIVED AND BORN. What to Avoid, etc. 320 pages (Illustrated). FREE 2 BOOKS (with every order).—Margaret Sanger's "What Every Girl Should Know"; also "Debate on Birth Control". All 3 books sent in plain wrapper postpaid for $2.50 (C. O. D. 17c extra).

OGILVIE PUB. CO., 67 Rose St., Dept. 83 New York

SEXUAL LOVE AND LIFE!

LIQUOR or DRUG HABIT CURED FOREVER OR NO PAY. Full treatment sent on trial. Can be given secretly at home. Guaranteed to free you forever from desire for whiskey, gin, wine, beer, opium, morphine and heroin. Costs $2.00 if cured, nothing if it fails. It is a preventative for Poison Liquor, carry it with you. Standard Laboratories B-82 28-29 Guilford Ave., BALTIMORE, MD.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912.

Of Weird Tales, published monthly at Indianapolis, Indiana, for October 1, 1926.

State of Indiana }
County of Marion } ss.

Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Wm. R. Sprenger, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Weird Tales and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher—Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Ind.

Editor—Farnsworth Wright, 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.

Managing Editor—None.

Business Manager—William R. Sprenger. 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Ill.

2. That the owner is: (If the publication is owned by an individual his name and address, or if owned by more than one individual the name and address of each, should be given below; if the publication is owned by a corporation the name of the corporation and the names and addresses of the stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of the total amount of stock should be given).

Wm. R. Sprenger, 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Illinois.

Farnsworth Wright, 450 E. Ohio St., Chicago, Illinois.

George M. Cornelius, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Indiana.

George H. Cornelius, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Indiana.

P. Cornelius, 2457 E. Washington St., Indianapolis, Indiana.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state). None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is..... (This information is required from daily publications only.)

WM. R. SPRENGER,
Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 28th day of September, 1926.

J. F. WEAKLEY,
[SEAL] Notary Public.
My commission expires June 6, 1927.

(Continued from page 861)

death, he had known his victory and had seen in that victory atonement for the evil done by his creature. With a shattered piece of metal Lanier dug a deep grave beneath the tree, and placed his friend in it, rolling a great stone to its head when he had filled it.

"Good-bye, Detmold," he whispered. "I think—I hope—that you have found some peace, now. Good-bye!"

There was no answer from the cold mound of earth, that lay like a brown scar on the bright carpet of grass. But it seemed that the wind was answering, sighing through the trees like a released spirit; that the pines were answering, pointing like lofty, dark-green spears to the blue depths above, where was an infinite freedom, a calm, eternal silence.

Wearily, Lanier walked away, an ache in his heart, a choking tightness in his throat. Very soon he stood again on the hills above the valley, contemplating the ruins of Stockton. The morning sunlight there was brilliant, and over the broken city lay a quietness, a tranquillity, that was like a protecting cloak. There was no smoke or sign of life.

But the people would return, Lanier thought. Word of the collapse of the outside metal giants would have spread swiftly, and already the cautious soldiers would be advancing, slowly, doubtfully. And later, others, single, adventuring spirits, small groups, crowds of hundreds. They would drift back to the ruined city and there would be puffing of steam-shovels and clatter of riveters and sawing and hammering and all sounds of building. They would come back . . . .

Away to the east, far up the valley, there was a crying of bugles.

TRAVEL FOR "UNCLE SAM"

Railway Mail Clerks on runs 8 days on 3-days off. Full pay. Common education sufficient. 32-page Civil Service Book **$1900-$2700 year** describing Government positions open to men and women 18 up and sample coaching lessons—FREE. Write today sure for your copy.
FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. C-282, Rochester, N. Y.

BARGAINS IN GUNS

No. M2. Swing Out Cylinder, Blue Steel, 6 Shot, Rifled Barrel, Sure Fire, Accurate, Powerful, 32, 32-20 or 38 Cal. — $14.50
No. 84. Blue Steel, Solid Frame, Double Action, 22, 32 or 38 Cal. 4.95
No. R7. Solid Steel, Blue Finish, Accurate, 22, 32 or 38 Cal. — 6.85
No. T5. Top Break, Blue Steel, Self-Ejector, 32 or 38 Cal. — 7.75
No. A8. Automatic, Blue Steel, 32 Cal. 6 shot $7.75, 25 Cal. 7 shot 6.45
ORDER BY NUMBER. GIVE CALIBER WANTED. Send no money. Pay your Postman price plus postage on delivery. Money refunded if not satisfied after inspection. All guns new use Standard American Cartridges. STERLING CO. DEPT. F-29, BALTIMORE, MD.

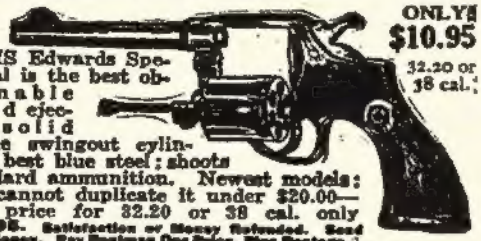
HEALING THE UNSEEN WAY

The Mighty Unseen Powers are Yours
Even as You Will

Let them heal, comfort and prosper you
Do It Now!

Give symptoms or desires. Name, address and Free Will Offering for Demonstration and Instruction and Be Convinced.

Aquarian Circle, Elkhart, Indiana



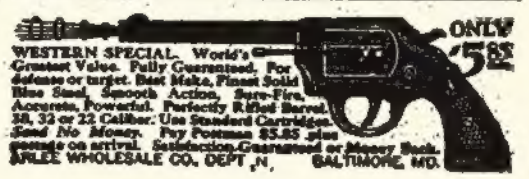
ONLY $10.95
32.20 or 38 cal.

THIS Edwards Special is the best obtainable hand ejector: solid frame swingout cylinder; best blue steel; shoots standard ammunition. Newest models: you cannot duplicate it under $20.00—Our price for 32.20 or 38 cal. only $10.95. Satisfaction or Money Refunded. Send No Money. Pay Postman Our Price, Plus Postage.
EDWARDS IMPORT TRADING CORP.
288 Broadway, Dept. C-8, New York, N. Y.

PICTURES BOOKS *and* NOVELTIES

CATALOG 10c

HOWARD SALES CO., Dept. 7, 1188 Folsom Street, SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.



ONLY $5.85

WESTERN SPECIAL. World's Greatest Value. Fully Guaranteed. For defense or target. Best Make, Finest Solid Blue Steel, Smooth Action, Sure-Fire, Accurate, Powerful. Perfectly Rifled Barrel. 38, 32 or 22 Caliber. Use Standard Cartridges. *Send No Money.* Pay Postman $5.85 plus postage on arrival. Satisfaction Guaranteed or Money Back.
ARLEE WHOLESALE CO. DEPT. N, BALTIMORE, MD.

LUCK

All around you there is abundant Success, Wealth and Happiness. Get Your Share. The "LUCKY SEVEN" Secret Rules are free to all who wear this Rare and beautiful Talisman Ring. On each side of this Odd and Charming Ring is moulded the figure of Fortuna—The "Goddess of Luck". Ancient belief, that her emblem brings luck and success to wearer in Love, Games, Business, Health and everything. Genuine 14-K Antique Gold S. Ring, mounted with one carat Blazing Blue White Mexican Im. Diamond. Guaranteed 20 years. Send strip of paper to show finger size and we will send you this wonderful ring. When it arrives pay the postman only $3.95. Nothing more to pay. Yours to keep, wear and enjoy forever. Wear 7 days—follow the 7 rules that we send you. If not satisfied your money quickly returned. Address

Radio-Flash Diamond Importing Co., St. Paul, Minn. Dept. 37-L

GUN BARGAINS
BONE-ITE HANDLES

NEW improved 1926 double-action models priced for quick sale. Genuine white bonesite handles free if you order right away. Mention number of gun.

No. 1B—Powerful six-shot swing-cylinder revolver; nickel or blue steel finish; 32, 32-20, 38 or 44 cal. . . $11.95

No. 2B—Handsome five-shot break-open revolver; 32, 38 or 44 cal. . . $7.95

No. 3B—Beautifully made seven-shot automatic with improved safety; 25 cal. $8.95

All guns of finest blue steel

All three shoot any standard American cartridge. PAY POSTMAN ON DELIVERY plus postage. Money back if not satisfied.

Consumers Co., Dept. 33A, 34 W. 28 St., N.Y.

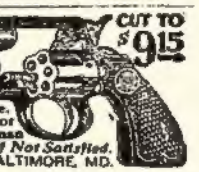
WANT NEW PEP QUICK?
HERE'S HOW TO GET IT

"All in!" Weak? Lack Vigor? Then send at once for WHIZ BANG, the amazing new discovery with almost magic-like action. Pep and energy come back QUICK—you feel like a new man full of red-blooded vim and push. Nothing like WHIZ BANG—that's why 1000s use it. No harmful drugs that form habits. Results guaranteed or money back. Send $2.00 for double strength package.

Special 2 package offer, $3.00. Also C.O.D.

Sani-Research Co., Inc., Dept. W-3, 248 W. 34th St., New York

Sale!



CUT TO $9.15

Buy Direct And Save Money. Only $9.15 for this Blue Steel, *Swing Out Cylinder, Hand Ejector Revolver.* Six Shot, Accurate, Light Action, Sure Fire, Hard Hitting, Full Rifled Barrel. Best Make, Latest Model, *Fully Guaranteed.* 32, 32-20, or 38 Calibers. Send No Money. Pay Postman $9.15 plus postage on arrival. *Money Back If Not Satisfied.*

ARLEE WHOLESALE CO., DEPT. 9, BALTIMORE, MD.

The Book of LUCK

Contains Golden Secrets of good Fortune, Talismans, Charms, Mascots, Omens, Lucky Number, Gems and Colors. Never before published. Sent in plain wrapper. Send only 50c stamps or coins.

ORIENT EXCHANGE, DEPT. WT-1
98 Park Place, New York

The Guard's Error

(Continued from page 850)

wanted a cigarette. . . . to read again *The Flower Beneath the Foot* . . . . to see his wife again . . . . to see some of those—others. . . .

The doctor had told him he might smoke a cigarette occasionally: but what good was this now? Something wild was loose on the road. It would smell him as it passed. It would stop and——

Lightning flashed!

A lithe brown figure, bent forward from the hips, running easily, swinging a curved sword back and forward as it ran, shone out of the dark, but thirty feet from where he stood gasping, digging his nails into the parchment of his face. A little stream of blood ran down his right cheek.

The lean running body shone with sweat, seemed phosphorescent in that gap in the dark. Perhaps in recognition of the cowering figure at the side of the road, which stared on him with large fearful eyes, a smile broke the black's set face. It looked fiendish in the glare of light that lived so short a time.

All was dark. A heavier rain fell suddenly. Thunder rolled.

There was an eery shriek, and an answering superstitious wail from the black: then came a splintering crash as Smithen dived into the brush, breaking through a stretch of tall brush and running vine.

Ungel saw him there, in the second lightning flash. His head was buried in soft mud: his slender mud-bespattered legs shot up grotesquely over the broken vine.

The negro, who, worried at his master's lengthened absence, had come in search of him, felt, in the dark, for Smithen's heart. He ascertained the man was dead. Tears filled his eyes. Just then thunder sobbed.

Unusual Stories

WEIRD TALES has obtained a wealth of utterly bizarre and original stories, and the next few issues will offer a superb feast of imaginative reading—scientific tales that plumb the future with prophetic insight; tales of other planets, and the cosmic spaces between the stars; gooseflesh tales of unutterable horror; uncanny stories of werewolves and black magic; graveyard tales; ghost-stories such as the Southern negro tells around a watermelon patch at night; thrill-tales of weird action; tales of the bizarre and unusual; fascinating orientales; gripping Chinese and Egyptian mystery tales; stories that take the reader far away from the humdrum environment of everyday life. Among the gems in the next few issues are:

THE WOMAN OF THE WOOD, *By A. Merritt*
A forest of trees in actual warfare against their human foes—a different tale, utterly weird, utterly fascinating, utterly thrilling—grippingly told by the author of "The Moon Pool" and other startling books.

FETTERED, *By Greye La Spina*
A serial novel of occult Evil that drew its chains about two men and two women in the northern woods—a tale of midnight horror and frightful doom—an utterly fascinating story that will hold the reader breathless.

THROUGH THE VORTEX, *By Donald Edward Keyhoe*
Thrilling novelette about one who was drawn through the whirling vortex into a strange land inhabited by frightful monsters and fearsome green-hued men.

THE DREAMER OF ATLÂNAAT, *By E. Hoffmann Price*
An orientale of exquisite beauty and strange thrills—a tale of the Lord of the World, and the fierce Sultan of Angor-lana, by the author of "The Sultan's Jest" and "The Stranger From Kurdistan."

SI URAG OF THE TAIL, *By Oscar Cook*
Terrific story of a man-eating orchid in the wilds of Borneo—a mystery tale of weird adventures in the jungle wilderness.

THE LIFE SERUM, *By Paul S. Powers*
Startling pseudo-scientific yarn about a great physician who passed the frontiers of life and came back again—a surgeon who thought he had solved the secret of death.

SPIDER-BITE, *By Robert S. Carr*
A tale of great white Egyptian tomb-spiders, resurrected mummies, cataleptic trances and precious jewels—a story of eery thrills.

THE DEVIL'S GRAVEYARD, *By G. G. Pendarves*
Giles the Thruster comes back from the Pit to fulfil an ancient curse, accompanied by the Four Ancients and Gaffarel the Mighty.

THESE are but a few of the many super-excellent stories in store for the readers of WEIRD TALES. To make sure of getting your copy each month, just pin a dollar bill to this coupon.

WEIRD TALES,
408 Holliday Building,
Indianapolis, Ind.

Enclosed find $1 for special five months subscription to "Weird Tales", to begin with the June issue. (Special offer void unless remittance is accompanied by coupon.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

LOVERS

of Mystery Fiction

Will Have to Hurry if They Want to Take Advantage of This Amazing Offer

Here They Are

1. **Crimson Poppies**—Dr. Howes evolves a fiendish plot to inherit the wealth of a lunatic millionaire.
2. **Buff**—A cub reporter and a death mystery—a story that works up to a crashing climax.
3. **The Triangle of Terror**—A Gooseflesh story that will send the cold shivers up your spine.
4. **The Valley of Missing Men**—Read how Parkinson discovered this baffling mystery—a story pulsating with hair-raising incidents.
5. **The Sign of the Toad**—An eery detective story, full of exciting situations and mysterious deaths.
6. **The Mystery at Eagle Lodge**—Soul-gripping, fascinating, tense, full of action—You will move in the land of make-believe with a touch of the unreal.
7. **The Web**—This tale threads the sinister net that was torn asunder by the murder of James Blake.
8. **The Glass Eye**—The convict worked out a clever and diabolical scheme, but a dead man's eye betrayed him.
9. **Ten Dangerous Hours**—Bristling with excitement and full of surprizes—a remarkable story with thrills galore.
10. **Disappearing Bullets**—Crammed with blood-curdling action and strange happenings in the underworld—master-mind crooks and criminals.
11. **The Green-Eyed Monster**—A thrilling book, replete with startling climaxes and bristling with action.
12. **Derring-Do**—A vivid tale of Chinamen, opium traffic, the secret service, and desperate fighting.

12 MYSTERY ADVENTURE DETECTIVE BOOKS 1.00 for All

JUST think, you can get this whole library of 12 clean and wholesome books for about 8 1/3c each. Every one of these splendid books has a striking cover in colors on enamel stock, and the inside is printed on good white paper. You are cheating yourself if you miss these masterpieces of startling, scalp-prickling thrills. These novels, ranging from 15,000 to 25,000 words in length, are powerfully written and will hold you spellbound—make you breathe fast with a new mental sensation. They are not the usual run of stories, but are off the beaten path—uncommon tales that will cling to your memory for many a day.

SUPPLY NEAR EXHAUSTION

This offer may be withdrawn at any time. Treat yourself to some real entertainment while you still have the chance. Send for these books today. Do it now! **Just pin a dollar bill to the coupon.**

POPULAR FICTION PUBLISHING COMPANY
Dept. 24, 312 Dunham Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

MAIL THIS TODAY

POPULAR FICTION PUB. CO., Dept. 24,
312 Dunham Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

I enclose $1. Send at once, postage prepaid, the 12 volumes listed in this advertisement. It is understood this $1 is payment in full.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____